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THIRTY
DISCOURSES

ON
Practical Subjects.

By the late Reverend
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V O L. II.

L O N D O N :

Printed, and are to be Delivered to the
SUBSCRIBERS, by JOHN WYAT at
the *Rose* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1726.

1724

DISCOURSES
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LONDON:
Printed and sold by J. Bland, in the Strand, near the Temple Church.
1724.

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eth sure, having this Seal, The Lord
knoweth*

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A SER-

SERMON

ON

NEW-YEAR'S DAY.



ECCLES. vii. 10.

*Say not thou, What is the
Cause that the former Days
were better than these? For
thou dost not enquire wisely
concerning this.*



Amongst the many unhappy SERM.
Ways whereby Men contri- I.
bute to their own Misery,
one very common one is;
that whatever their present
Condition be, they are never satisfied

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B

with

SERM. with it; but over-looking, or, which is
 I. worse, under-valuing the Blessings of their
 own Times, they are always talking of,
 and magnifying those of former Ages;
 the golden Days and the happy Times
 which their Fore-fathers saw, but are hid
 from their Eyes. As if the Stores of Heaven
 were exhausted, and God had been so
 liberal to the Men of antient Times, that
 he had reserved no Blessings to bless us,
 even us also, upon whom the Ends of the
 World are come; Or, as if the World, instead
 of improving, grew every Age worse
 and worse, and each particular Generation
 were fallen into the Dregs of
 Time.

'Tis this querulous Temper, this magnifying
 the former Times at the Expence,
 and to the Diminution of the present,
 which was, it seems, in *Solomon's* Days,
 so common in the World, and, I believe I
 may add, has never since been out of use;
 I say, 'tis this unreasonable Humour which
 the royal Preacher reproves in the Text,
Say not thou, &c.

In speaking to these Words, I shall

New-Year's Day.

SERM.

L

I. MAKE some few Reflexions upon this Practice of Mens complaining of the Badness of the present Times; and magnifying the Happiness of former Ages.

II. I SHALL endeavour to discover the Rise of this Opinion, *that the former Days were better than these*: How it comes to pass, that Men always imagine their present Grievances to be greater than any that went before them. From whence it will appear,

III. How false and groundless this Opinion is, and how justly the Preacher rebukes this Practice of Murmuring and Complaining at our present Condition.

I. To make some few Reflexions upon this Practice of Men's complaining of the Badness of the present Times; and magnifying the Happiness of former Ages.

It were easy to show, that, in all Ages of the World, This has been the common

SERM. Practice of Mankind, to accuse Providence
I. of unrighteous Dealing, and to complain
that they are plac'd in worse Circumstances than those that lived before them: Which, by the Way, is a plain Proof of the Falseness and Injustice of this Accusation. For, whether we understand by the Times, the Course of human Affairs and the State and Condition of the World, or the Actions and Behaviour of Men; or both these together, because they have a close Connexion with, and a mutual Influence upon each other; I say, in what ever Sense we take this Expression, since the same wise and good God, whose Mercies are over all his Works, ever did and still does govern the World, and since he has never left Men without sufficient Abilities both to discern and pursue their own Interest, 'tis by no Means credible that every Age of Man should be subject to greater Miseries and Hardships than the former; but on the contrary, 'tis highly probable that Time and Experience should rather mend the Matter, and that these latter Ages should enjoy greater Happiness and more Conveniences of Life than the former.

BE-

New-Year's Day.

5

BESIDES; the Commonness of this Com-
plaint, and its being equally made use of
by People of all Ages and Places, is a
plain Proof that 'tis grounded rather upon
the peevish Passions and unreasonable Hu-
mours of Men, than upon any true and
impartial Reason; since 'tis wholly un-
accountable, that People of such diffe-
rent Times, and under such different Cir-
cumstances, should all have the same Cause
to take it up.

SERM.
I.

BUT however slender the Foundation of
it be, the Complaint is of a long Conti-
nuance, and as antient as the eldest Ac-
counts of Time; and perhaps will last as
long as Time it self. It has been the Hu-
mour of all Ages and Nations, and uni-
versally practis'd by Men under all Dif-
pensations, not only without, but even
contrary to all the Reason in the World.

THE *Jews*, whom God was pleas'd to
separate, and distinguish from the rest of
the World, by great Privileges and migh-
ty Blessings, above all the Nations upon
the face of the Earth: The *Jews*, I say,
who were God's peculiar People, and
taken into His Covenant and Care, were

SERM. never satisfy'd with their Condition, but
 I. were continually murmuring and repining
 at his Administration of Affairs, and finding Fault with the Provisions he had made for their Happiness. The whole History of that People is one continu'd Proof of this; and the Instances of it are so many, and so remarkable, that they need not be produced particularly. And if Men were so discontented under the Government of God himself, 'tis less to be wondered that they should be uneasy and dissatisfied under the best of human Administrations.

THIS was also one of those fore Evils under the Sun, which *Solomon* complains of, and the principal Cause of the rest; that Men were dissatisfied with their present Circumstances, and always complaining of the hard and unequal Dispensations of Providence; And yet 'tis observable, that the Days of *Solomon* were remarkably flourishing and prosperous, and his Reign was distinguished with the Blessings of Plenty and Peace. We read in the 1st Book of *Kings*, ch. 10. v. 27. that *he made Silver to be in Jerusalem as Stones, and Cedars be made to be as the*
 Syca-

Sycamore-trees, that are in the Vale for SERM.
abundance. Notwithstanding which, there I.
 were Men of morose and peevish Tempers,
 disturbing his Government, complaining
 of the Hardness of the Times, and repi-
 ning at their Condition, as wretched and
 miserable. And therefore 'tis not so strange
 to find the same Humour still prevail a-
 mong Men, the Times exclaim'd at, and
 the World represented under the worst
 Character, tho' it be in never so flourishing
 and prosperous a Condition.

BUT let us try in the next Place,

II. If we can account for this Hu-
 mour, and discover the Rise of this Opi-
 nion, *that the former Times were better*
than these; How it comes to pass, that
 Men always imagine their present Griev-
 ances to be greater than any that went
 before them.

AND here we must observe, that Men
 come to the Knowledge of what pass'd in
 former Ages, by the Report only, and hi-
 storical Accounts of other Men, who liv'd
 in those Times, and transmitted down in
 Writing the most remarkable Occurren-
 ces,

SERM. ces, for the Use and Instruction of succeeding Generations.

I.

Now he that is but a little conversant in the Histories of former Ages, cannot but make this general Observation;—That in every Age of the World, and every Nation under Heaven, of which we have any Accounts left us; the Calamities of the Times, and the Corruption and Wickedness of Mankind, make up far the greatest Part of the History.

INDEED, what are all Histories, but so many Registers of the great Disorders and Confusions that have happened in the World? What do they entertain us with, but long Catalogues of the Miseries and Misfortunes of Mankind, and the great Instability of human Affairs? What do they relate, but the dreadful Effects of Tyranny and Ambition, the fatal Overthrow of Kings and Kingdoms, the depopulating of Countries; burning of Cities, the Miscarriages of great Men, and the hard Fortune of private Persons? In a word, most Histories, how entertaining soever the Relation may be, are made up of such Things as are most grievous to hu-

human Nature: And, which is further re-SERM.
markable, every Writer, almost, repre-
sents the Evils of his own Times, as the
greatest that ever befel any People in the
World: So that if we credit the Com-
plaints of the several Historians who in-
form us of what passed in Their Days, we
must conclude, that each particular Age
we are reading of, was much worse than
any that went before it; and consequently
that Vice and Wickedness, and thereupon
the Confusion and Disorder of the World,
and the Miseries and Calamities of human
Life, have been all this while encreasing
and gathering Strength, and that the
present Times were the worst and the
most wicked, of any since the World
began.

BUT without going so far back as the
antient Records of Time will lead us: if
we only enquire of our Fathers, and the
oldest Men amongst us, how the World
went in Their Days, and what State and
Condition Things were in; they will im-
mediately exclaim against the Badness of
the Times they now live in, and the present
Degeneracy of the World, and entertain

us

SERM. us with many fine Relations and Accounts
 I. of the happy State of Affairs in their
 younger Days.

THIS is Part of the just Character which the Poet gives us of an old Man, that he is *Laudator Temperis acti*, a great Admirer of Antiquity, and of all that pass'd in his youthful Days; while he decries the present Course of Things, and the modern Administration of Affairs. And we our selves are too apt to run into the same Humor, to extol those Actions that are past, and which we are no longer concern'd in, while we neglect and undervalue the Things that are before us, and which 'tis our Interest to make the most and best of, that we can.

HENCE we shall find that this Opinion is chiefly grounded upon that great Variety of Evils, whereby the several Ages and Nations of the World have been distinguish'd from each other.

WHOEVER duly considers the Nature and Condition of this World, will find no great Reason to promise himself much Happiness from it. Indeed had Sin never enter'd into the World, but the Practice
 of

of universal Righteousness had obtain'd in SERM.
all Times and Places; the Evils we now
suffer, would have been wholly, or in a
great Measure, removed. For Sin is the
Cause of the most and worst Evils we
suffer in this World, as well as of those we
shall undergo in the next.

FROM *whence come Wars and Fightings among you*, says the Apostle, *come they not hence? even of your Lusts that war in your Members*, James 4. 1. Our greatest Enemies are those of our own Household, our unruly Lusts and Passions; and nothing else could make the World so bad as it is. These are the great Hindrances of the Peace and Happiness of Mankind: These are they that have disturb'd, and *turn'd the World upside down*; that have inverted the Order of Things, and, by confounding the eternal and immutable Difference and Distinction between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, have introduced all that Disorder and Confusion which we now see and lament.

AND, which is very strange and deplorable, there have been as many different Methods and Fashions of sinning against
God,

SERM. God, and violating the eternal Laws of
 I Righteousness, as Modes and Forms of
 Government ; and every Age and Nation
 has felt as many Changes and Revolutions
 in Vice and Wickedness, as in Dominion
 and Empire.

SOME Times and Nations have been remarkable for open Violence and Oppression, others for secret Fraud and treacherous Dealing ; one while Lust and Luxury, Excess and Debauchery have been the reigning Vices, at another Time Covetousness and Extortion have had their Turn. Sometimes Hypocrisy or Superstition, a pretended or mistaken Piety has prevail'd ; and at other Times, a downright Neglect or Contempt of God and Religion has been the common Practice.

IN a word, Sin and Wickedness have at all Times prevailed too much in the World : And such is the Deceitfulness of Sin, and so many the Wiles of the Devil, that it has seldom appear'd long in the same Shape, but has put on different Forms at different Times ; that it might, with greater Ease and Success, impose upon the
 World.

World. Vice rarely comes abroad naked SERM.
and barefac'd; this would fright Men a- L
way from it, instead of drawing them af-
ter it; and therefore it is forced to use
all the Arts it can, to conceal its Deformity. It puts on Disguises and false Colours, is frequently shifting and changing its Dress, and makes different Appearances at different Times.

FOR if all manner of Vice and Wickedness was, at the same Time, let loose among us; this would make such Havock and Confusion in the World, as would awaken and alarm us, and force Men to enter upon some Measures to prevent their Ruine, and be good out of a Principle of Self-preservation. And therefore the Devil very artificially suits his Baits to the several Seasons and Opportunities he meets with; and as he finds one Generation of Men more inclin'd by their present Circumstances and Condition to some sorts of Vices than others, so he prepares his Temptations accordingly, and sometimes plays upon some Passions, and sometimes upon others. At some Periods of Time, he finds it easier to draw Men into some

SERM. Vices than others, according to the Condition and Circumstances of Affairs; and he never fails to make use of such Opportunities.

I. Now when there has been such great Variety of Wickedness in the World, and each particular Generation has distinguished it self from the rest by some peculiar Extravagancies, and has been notorious for some Sort of Vices above others: 'tis natural for Historians, who take most Notice of what is most remarkable, to represent the Vices which are so flagrant in their own Times, under the worst Character, when they find the Ages immediately preceeding, not so guilty in that kind, though in other Instances, perhaps, they exceeded their own in Wickedness: I say, 'tis natural for them, while they are deeply touch'd with a Sense of the Wickedness of their own Times, to overlook that of former Ages, especially when it was of a different Kind, and so to represent their own Times as worse than any that went before, when perhaps, if all Things were duly weighed, they were not near so bad; For though they might be ill enough in some

some Respects, in others they might be SERM.
much better than any of the former. I.

BUT if, by the Times, we understand, not the Lives and Actions of Men, but the State and Condition of the World, the Times in the common Acceptation of that Word; as when we say, the Times are good or bad; (and This rather than the former, is the Cause of most Mens murmuring against Providence; for we seldom show much Concern for the moral State of the World, the State of Religion and Virtue, as long as we enjoy an Affluence of the good Things of Life, and our secular Affairs go on and prosper;) We shall find that the Complaint of the Times, taken in this Sense, arises from the great Variety of Evils and Troubles incident to human Life, and the Instability of all worldly Affairs.

FOR whatever the Hardships or Grievances be which we complain of; if we look back upon the Times that are past, we shall discover, if not the same Grievances, yet others perhaps as bad, and which we should be more uneasy under, than the present. The World we live in

SERM. in is a troublesome Place; and there is no

I. State of Life, nor any Period of Time, exempt from Hardships and Inconveniences: And when our Affairs prosper as we would have them, we are not secure of their continuing long in that Condition. Or if Matters go well in some Respects, perhaps they are as wrong in another; And this takes off from the Satisfaction which we might otherwise enjoy.

'Tis possible, we may want many Things which they who lived before us were possessed of; but then we may have many other Advantages, which they were Strangers to. And though they felt not the same Hardships with us, yet they might have Difficulties of another Kind to contend with, which would be as uneasy to us as those we feel at present.

'Tis the Nature and Condition of this World to be full of Changes and Revolutions; and publick Calamities as well as publick Blessings have always taken their several Turns, and succeeded each other. Sometimes Wars, and Rumors of Wars have filled the World; at other Times the Pestilence hath walked in the Dark-

ness

ness, and Sickness destroy'd at Noon-Day; SERM.
and again, at other Times, Famine, an I.
universal Want, or great Scarcity of the
Necessaries of Life has ensu'd. In like
Manner, the Blessings of Health, and Peace,
and Plenty, have had their Turns, and at
different Times have made their Appearance in the World.

Now whenever any of these Calamities befall us, and any of these Blessings are taken from us, we are apt to think That Time to be worse than any that went before, and to complain of it as such: Whereas 'tis nothing more than the natural Effect of the mutable State and Condition of the World.

The same may be observ'd of lesser and more private Joys and Sorrows, which take their several Turns in human Life; such as Pain and Pleasure, Youth and Old Age, Sickiness and Health, Poverty and Riches. At whatever Time we are seised with the one, and deprived of the other, those Days we look upon as worse than the former, because we feel the present Evils, and forget the former, which, 'tis likely, were as
VOL. II. C many,

SERM. many, and as great as those we now complain of. So that if we take any Age of the World, or any Part of our own Age, and compare it on both Sides, and balance the Evil against the Good; generally speaking, we shall find it difficult to pronounce the present Time to be worse than the former, and scarce be willing to exchange it for any that went before; since, though in some Respects this might make our Condition better, yet it would not mend it in others; and upon the whole, we should find Reason to sit down contented with our present State.

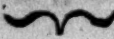
FROM what has been said, we shall soon see in the

III^d. Place, How false and groundless this Opinion is, *That the former Times were better than these*, and how justly the Preacher rebukes this Practice of murmuring and complaining at our present Condition.

IF we take the Times in the first Sense, for the Lives and Actions of Men; considering the great Variety of Wickedness which has been, and still

still is in the World; when Men ob-
serve their own Times to be very guil-
ty in some Particulars, far beyond the
Example of former Ages in the same
Case, by an easy Mistake they con-
clude them to be, in all Respects and
absolutely, the worst of any that went
before; when perhaps, if the Mat-
ter was thoroughly examin'd, and the
Case fairly stated on both Sides, they
would discover as great, if not great-
er Faults, though of another Kind, in
former Ages, than in their own; and,
upon the whole, would see Reason to
conclude, that the World, however de-
fective in some Particulars, was, in the
main, in as good a Condition now as
ever.

For as all Men, taken in the gross,
are equal and stand upon a Level,
there being no remarkable Difference
between one Man and another; but
what Education and Instruction have
made, every Man almost having some
peculiar Talent of his own, though of
different Kinds: So the several Genera-
tions of Men, composed of these Individu-

SERM. I.  als, have, in a good Measure, been equal to one another; and what they have wanted in one Kind, have made up in another. So that though the former Times might, in some Respects, be better than these; yet these may, upon other Accounts, excel those; Especially if we consider the many Advantages which we enjoy above any that went before us; for which reason, 'tis highly credible that the World is in a better Condition at this Day, than ever it was at any Time before; and instead of growing still worse and worse, does rather mend and improve, and become daily better.

THOSE excellent Means and Opportunities which we are bless'd with in greater Abundance than our Fore-fathers were, must needs have wrought some proportionable Effect upon us. 'Tis an undeniable Truth, that great Numbers were reform'd from their Wickedness by the first Preaching of the Gospel, which dispell'd the thick Mists of Error and Superstition wherever the Light of it shin'd, and laid

a great Restraint upon the unruly Lusts and Passions of Men; so that in a short Time, the World became much wiser and better than it was before. And though the present Generation has not made those Improvements which might be expected from the many Advantages it enjoys; yet it is not to be imagin'd, that we should so far degenerate, that instead of being the best Age in the World, (which we might be,) we should be the worst of any before us.

WE have indeed great Numbers of wicked Men amongst us, and the Wickedness of the Times is a very common and popular Topick; but it may also be too much insisted on. For 'tis by no Means a fair Way of Reasoning, to estimate the Wickedness of the World in general, from that of some particular People; and because there are so many bad, to cry out, that *there is none good, no not one.*

I CONFESS, I have no very extraordinary Opinion of the present Age; but I think Men may have too mean an

SERM.

I.



Opinion of it, and run it down lower than it is. For 'tis evident, and ought to be Matter of Thanksgiving to God, that there are many excellent and exemplary Men, who are a Light and a Blessing to the World, still living amongst us; whose Learning and Labours are of great Use and Service to the Cause of Religion, and tend to the Instruction and Reformation of Mankind. The Worship of God is duly frequented and attended; great Numbers of Schools are erected and maintained for the Education and Instruction of poor Children. Societies are formed for propagating Christian Knowledge, and for the Reformation of Manners; And the Lives and Conversation of Men, though far from being blameless, yet are not so bad as to make the present Age the most profligate of any that preceded it.

If we take the Times in the other Acceptation, as they denote the State and Condition of the World in civil Matters, the Complaint will appear equally groundless. We are not, nor ever shall be, at perfect Rest and Ease
in

in this World; and yet we are as free SERM.
from Hardships and Pressures, as any I.
that lived before us. But the Case is
this: The present Trouble or Uneasiness is always the greatest, and most grievous to be born. Every Man's own Afflictions are the heaviest; and whenever we are under any Pressure, we are apt to cry out, *was ever Grief like mine?* The Hardness of the present Times is always the most sensible; and we can't help thinking, that if we had lived in the Days of our Fathers, it had not been thus and thus with us. But our Fathers might have other Trials of their Patience which we are Strangers to, and endure Hardships of another kind, which by far exceed any that we have felt.

THE Men of one Age suffer for themselves; and consequently are more sensible of the Evil, than they can be of what they read as done in former Times. One or two Injuries that a Man himself feels, make deeper Impressions than twenty Relations of the like suffered by others, and his Complaints will be a

SERM. great deal louder; but his Complaints
 I. will not be heard forty Years hence, if
 he be dead; or if they should be read
 in Books, they will not be attended
 to, as less Complaints will be of one
 who suffers them. And so it is with
 those we see with our Eyes; they af-
 fect us much more than those which
 we hear with our Ears, though credi-
 bly reported and believed. For History
 is one Thing, and Experience another;
 and Things at a Distance show much less
 than those which are at hand *.

THE Truth is; the World, in the
 main, is much the same now as it was
 in Times of Old; and the Reason why
 we fancy it worse now than it was former-
 ly, is, because we feel the Evils of the pre-
 sent Times, but not of those that are past.
 The World, I say, is much the same as it
 us'd to be; but we did not always live
 in it, and so could not make a Trial of
 former Times, as we do of the present.
 We are not so well acquainted with for-
 mer Times, as with our own.

AND

* Bp. of Ely's Charge at his primary Visitation, p. 6.

AND indeed, it cannot well be other-
 wise, than that the Effects should be near
 the same at all Times, when the same
 Causes are in being, and in force. Hu-
 man Nature, and Mens Passions, are ge-
 nerally the same at all Times; the Pro-
 vocations that Men give to Injuries, are
 much the same; and the Handles and
 Occasions that Men take hold of, differ
 not much at different Times. And since
 these are generally the Sources of Mens
 Sufferings, no Wonder if the Streams
 run very near alike at all Times †.

OR, whatever Difference there may be
 between the present and the former Times,
 it consists not in an Exemption from Trou-
 bles and Calamities, but in a Change and
 Variety of them. At some Times, such
 Circumstances, Occurrences, and Occasi-
 ons arise, as give Birth to some Sorts of
 Evils and Miseries; while other Times
 furnish Matter for Calamities of another
 Kind. So that the Times are much up-
 on a Level, and the World at all Times

wick-

† Bp. of Ely's Charge at his primary Visitation, p. 6.

SERM. wicked and troublefom; only the Sins
 I. and Sorrows with which the World abounds, are more or less various and diverse, as Occasions offer, and Opportunity serves. There are Evils peculiar to every Time, to the former as well as these; and all Times have their proper Advantages, as well these as the former. And therefore instead of being transported with that common Humor of censuring and condemning the present State of Times, and commending the Times past, as if the Course of Events were not manag'd by the same wise Providence now, which govern'd the World before; we should, whenever any Calamity over-takes us, search and try our Hearts, consider our Ways and our Doings, and labour to find out the Reason of God's Displeasure, that we may accordingly meet him in his Ways. This will better become us, than magisterially to censure and condemn those Dispensations of Providence which we cannot understand.

THE Scripture frequently enjoins us to enquire after the Cause of publick
 or

or private Calamities, in order to find SERM.
I.
out and remove the accursed Thing from among us, and reconcile God to us; and therefore the Text does not forbid this. This is our Wisdom and Understanding; and is incumbent upon us, as we are reasonable and accountable Creatures.

BUT the Text forbids all such Enquiries after the Reason of God's Dispensations towards us, as proceed from Peevishness and Passion, and argue a discontented impatient Spirit.

It is not for us to know the Times and the Seasons which the Father has kept in his own Power. We are incompetent Judges of the Ends and Designs of Providence; and ought not to take upon us to censure God's Dispensations towards us, or to charge him foolishly.

In this Sense we do not wisely enquire concerning this Matter; or, as it is rendered in the Margin, we do not enquire out of Wisdom, but out of Folly. For this is above our Capacity to comprehend: It does not concern us, nor can we know it, and therefore it is Folly to endeavour to search it out.

SERM.

I.



'Tis fit that the Government of the World should be left to God, and we ought to acquiesce in his Administration of Affairs. Let the Times be what they will, if we behave our selves well, and discharge our Duty, we may make them tolerable to us. Nay, this would mend them, and keep them from ever being bad. But instead of this, we neglect our Duty, and run our selves into Mischief, and then complain against God for the Evil we suffer, which is nothing else but the Effect of our own Sin and Folly; according to the wise Man's Observation, *Prov. 19. 3. The Foolishness of Man perverteth his Way, and his Heart fretteth against the Lord.* This is the true Ground of most of those Complaints which Men take up against the present Times. Affairs without go wrong, because they are not right themselves within; and Things are all out of Order abroad, because they are so at Home in their own Breasts. Their Case is like that of a Man in a Fever, or any such Distemper, who complains his Bed is so hard or uneven, that he cannot rest; and

and lays all the Blame upon that ; where-
as 'tis his own Indisposition, the work-
ing of his Disease within him, and not
any Thing without him, which makes
him so restless and uneasy. In like man-
ner, Men often charge their Misery and
Unhappiness upon the Times, and the
outward State of the World ; when 'tis
wholly owing to themselves, and to
their own ill Humours and unruly Pas-
sions. They are uneasy and dissatisfi-
ed, because they are inwardly diseased
and distemper'd. They indulge some
unlawful Lust or Passion ; they give way
to Anger and Revenge ; are prey'd up-
on by Pride and Covetousness ; eaten
up with Ambition and Vain-glory, and
over-run with such unruly Affections :
and because they cannot have their un-
reasonable Wills gratify'd, nor compass
their private Ends, the publick Affairs
are in an ill Condition, the World is bad,
the Times are hard, and all Things
wrong and out of Order.

If we take an impartial Survey of the
present Times, we must place Mens Un-
easiness to this Account. If any are dis-
pleased

SERM. pleased at the present State of Affairs,
 I (and what is there which will please
 all?) and are uneasy at their Condition; they will find the Fault to be in themselves. For without entering into Particulars, 'tis obvious in general, and what we cannot but observe with Pleasure, that there can be no Time mentioned since we were a Nation, wherein we could look back with so much Pleasure upon Dangers we have escap'd, or forward upon such a Prospect of Happiness as we have now before us, and which nothing but our own Folly and Perverseness can defeat. How justly and truly may we congratulate each other upon the many and mighty Blessings we enjoy in our publick Capacity, and upon the well-grounded Hopes we have of a long Continuance of them?

AND as to our private Capacities; if we would look well to our own Ways, we might, in a great Measure, redress those Grievances which we so much complain of, and make the Times such as we would wish, such as a wise and good Man would rest content with.

And

And however some particular Events, SERM.
 singly consider'd, might seem prejudicial I.
 for the present; the whole Contexture of
 Affairs would, in the last Issue and Re-
 sult of Things, prove for the best. For, to
 use the Apostle's Words, with which I
 shall conclude, *All Things shall work
 together for good to those that love God.*

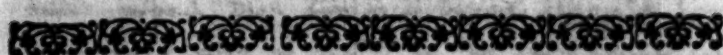


Of



Of Doing as we would be
done by.

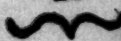
Preach'd before the Princesses, at
Kensington.



MATT. vii. 12.

*Therefore all Things whatso-
ever ye would that Men
should do to you, do ye even
so to them, for this is the
Law and the Prophets.*

SERM.
II.



portance.

H A T Connexion these
Words have, or whether
they have any, with what
went before ; is a Question
of more Difficulty than Im-

THEY

THEY make an entire Sense of them-SERM.
selves, and contain that great and univer-II.
sal Rule of Right or Equity which our
Saviour commands us to observe in all
our Dealings with one another; And that
is, to do as we would be done unto; to
treat others in the same Manner as we
would have them treat us; and to mete
the same Measure to others, as we would
have measured to us again.

THIS our Saviour styles *the Law and
the Prophets, i. e.* This is the Sum and
Substance of all the Precepts in the Old
Testament, which concern our Duty to
our Neighbour; (for our Duty to God is
a distinct Consideration:) This contains all
the Commands of the Second Table, and
comprises whatever either the Light of
Nature, or the Laws of God teach us to
do to one another. All the mutual and
relative Duties of human Life; whatever
is owing from one Man to another; may
be reduc'd to this general Rule, Of doing
as we would be done by.

WE meet with the same Rule in o-
ther Places of Scripture, differently ex-
press'd, with the same Character of its

SERM. comprehensive Nature. Thus St. Paul
 II. tells the *Galatians*, *ch. 5. 14.* that *all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And in *ch. 6. of that Epistle, v. 2.* he gives us the same Precept, *Bear ye one anothers Burthens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ.* This comprehensive Love is elsewhere stil'd *the End of the Commandment*, *1 Tim. 1. 5.* it being the main Drift and Design of the Gospel, to bring us to this Temper. St. *James* calls it the *Royal Law*, *ch. 2. v. 8.* as that which has the Precedence of all others, and rules over them. For where-ever this obtains, it will command Obedience to the rest. All these Passages have the same Meaning, though not express'd in such significant and convincing Terms, as that in the Text; *Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I SHALL make it my Business in my following Discourse,

I. To *explain* this Rule.

II. To show the great *Reasonableness* and Equity of it.

III. To consider the peculiar *Advantages* of this Rule above any other.

IV. To perswade you to the *Practice* of it.

I. FOR the *Explication* of this Rule; the general Meaning of it is this;—That we should change Places with every Man whom we have to deal with; put our selves into his Circumstances and Condition, and him into ours; suppose thou wert he, and as he is, and he altogether such an one as thy self; Make his Case thy own; and then look, whatever thou art desirous should be done unto thee, That do thou unto him; and whatever thou art unwilling should be done unto thee, that do not thou unto him. In a word, have the same Thoughts and Sentiments of his Condition, as thou wouldst have of it thy self, and wouldst that he should have of it too, were it thine own;

SER M. And therefore bear the same Affection towards him, and do the same kind Offices for him, which thou wouldst desire for thy self, whenever it comes to thy Turn to be in the same Condition with him.

II.

THIS is the general Meaning of these Words; *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

BUT this general Rule must be taken with this Restriction, that the Things which we would that Men should do to us, be both reasonable and lawful. The Rule indeed is expressed universally, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you*—— But it must be understood only of such Things as are just and fitting to be done. And therefore though we may be apt sometimes to desire others to do unreasonable or unlawful Things for our sakes; it does not follow from this Rule, that therefore we should do the same for Them; or if we should be so foolish or wicked as to do any Thing of this Kind for others, that they are obliged upon our Request to do the like for us.

THUS,

THUS, for Instance, if I should be so SERM.
unreasonable as to desire another not only II.

to relieve my Wants out of his Abundance, but to make me rich, and furnish me with Superfluities; and he should comply with this Request: It does not therefore follow, that I am obliged to deal thus by Another; because another Man's complying with my unreasonable Request, is no Reason, nor lays any Obligation upon me to do an unreasonable Thing for him. All that I am obliged to, is, to supply his Wants, and furnish him with the Necessaries of Life; but not to enrich him, though it were in my Power to do so.

AGAIN: If one Man be so unreasonable, as not to be content with moderate Profit in the Way of his Dealings, to desire others to recede from their Right, and not oppose him in case of any Competition; to be unwilling to let others have their own, or that they should use the proper Means of recovering what is their due: In these and such like Cases, where Men desire unreasonable Things to be done for them, this Rule does not ob-

SERM. blige us to comply with their Humours,
 H. though we our selves should be apt to desire the same of Them.

A CONDEMNED Malefactor would not have the Sentence of Death executed upon him; Must therefore the Magistrate spare those, who, by the Laws both of God and Man, ought to be cut off, because if he were in the Malefactor's Place, he should desire the same?

A CHILD or a Servant that has done amiss, would not be punish'd; Must therefore Masters and Parents lay aside all Correction, because when they were Children and Servants they petition'd against all Punishment?

AGAIN: A wicked Man would have others not only give him no Disturbance in his Wickedness, but be assistant to him in it, further him in his ill Designs, and procure for him sinful Pleasures; but this is no Reason for our Compliance, though we our selves, if we were wicked, should be willing that others should thus comply with us.

FROM these and other Instances, which are very obvious, and therefore need not be

be multiply'd, 'tis evident, that the Rule SERM.
II.
in the Text must be understood with this Limitation; That the Things which we would have others do to us, must be both reasonable and lawful; such as in our calmest Thoughts, and upon the most mature Deliberation we can justify; such as are fit to be asked of others, and we may reasonably expect they should grant us. For such Things only we are oblig'd to do to them: And there are many Cases wherein we are not to grant that to others, which we should be willing to obtain from them, were they in our Circumstances, and we in theirs.

Thus we see the Rule is to be understood of just and reasonable Requests, of Things we may with Decency desire of others, and they cannot deny us without Inhumanity. All such Things as these, whatever we thus desire others to do unto us, we are oblig'd to do likewise unto them.

I SHALL further illustrate this Rule, by applying it to Practice, and putting some of the chief Cases wherein we are to observe it.

SERM.

II.



I. IN Matters of civil Respect, and common Conversation, this Rule obliges us to behave our selves towards others, as we would have them carry it towards us ; to show all that Civility to others, which we expect our selves. Not to overlook or despise others, not to engross all the Discourse, or confine all Sense to our selves ; but to give others the Liberty of Speech, to be willing to hear what they have to say in their Turn, and to allow that they have Sense and Understanding as well as we. Without this, no Society or Conversation can be maintain'd ; For every Man has a good Opinion of himself, and thinks himself some Body ; and we had as good refuse Men our Company, or turn them out of it, as treat them rudely, and not allow them the same Liberty and Freedom which we our selves take.

As most Men have some particular Humours which they would have born with, so, if we expect that others should accommodate themselves to us, we must not think much to yield in like Manner to Them. We must give that Room, and

make

make that Allowance to other Men's Temper, SERM.
pers, which we desire for our own; we II.
must not be rough and untractable, stiff
and tenacious in our Conversation with
others, because we would not have others
deal so with us; but be gentle, and easy
to be entreated, willing to yield to and
comply with others, as far as we may,
for Peace and Quiet's sake; for 'tis thus
we would be treated our selves.

WE must not insult over the Misfortunes of others, upbraid them with their Faults or their Follies, expose their Weakness, take Advantage of their Ignorance or Mistakes, lay hold of every hasty Word or unguarded Expression, or be provok'd or fly into a Passion upon a slight or no Occasion. We must not take up rash and groundless Prejudices against others; misrepresent their Words and Actions: We must not delight to rip up the Miscarriages of others, or to hear them expos'd, ridicul'd, defam'd and slander'd, and made the Mirth and Entertainment of the Company. These Things we must carefully avoid in our Conversation with others, because they are so many Transgressions

of

SERM. of this Rule, of doing as we would be
 II. done by.

2. IN the reciprocal Duties of human Life, and the mutual good Offices which we owe one another; this Rule obliges us to be helpful and beneficial to all who are in any Manner of Want, as far as it lies in our Power: That we should be That to others in every State and Condition of Life, which we would have them to be to us in the like Circumstances.

ARE we ignorant in any Matter that concerns us, and would we willingly be better instructed and inform'd? We our selves must be ready to teach others, to correct their Mistakes, and put them into the right Way. Would we, when we have done amiss, choose rather to be privately admonish'd of our Fault, and reprov'd in the Spirit of Meekness; than be publickly expos'd, rail'd at, and revill'd? We our selves must deal thus with others. Are we needy and necessitous; and do we think it hard, that those, who have it in their Power, will have no Compassion on us, nor relieve our Wants? If we have
 this

this World's Goods, and see our Brother SERM.
have need, we must not shut up our Bowels II.
of Compassion from him, but we must be
willing to give him whatsoever he wants,
and help him to the utmost of our Power.

WHEN we stand in need of any Cour-
tesy or Kindness from another; if we
would have it done us freely, and not
extorted by Importunity, or upbraided to
us afterwards; we our selves must thus dis-
pense our Favours to others. What we do,
we must do quickly, not grudgingly or of
Necessity, but with a liberal Hand, and a
cheerful Heart.

WOULD we have those, whom we have
offended, be ready to be reconcil'd to us,
and forgive us upon a reasonable Satisfac-
tion? Do we desire them to accept of an
ingenuous Acknowledgment, and not bring
us too low, or exact too much when they
have us at Advantage? We too must deal
thus by others; we must show our selves
gentle and easy to be entreated, willing to
forgive those who have offended us, to
come to an easy Accommodation of the
Matter, and not insist upon the utmost Far-
thing.

SERM.

II.

3. IN Matters of mutual Commerce and Contract, in Mens trading and dealing with one another; This Rule obliges us to the strictest Truth and Justice to those who repose any Trust or Confidence in us.

WE are not to take Advantage of the Wants or Weakness of others, because we would not be thus served our selves. If any Man be under a Necessity of buying or selling any Commodity, we are not to make a Prey of him, but to treat with him upon an equal Foot, and at the common Market Price. A general Demand and Call for any particular Goods, does by consequence create a Scarcity, and enhances the Price, and there we may justly demand more; but I speak now of the private Wants and Necessities of any particular Person, which we ought not to take Advantage of. Much less should we impose upon Mens Ignorance, and make them pay for their Want of Skill in those Things which they treat with us about; especially when they refer themselves to us, and rely upon us.

FOR

FOR as 'tis next to impossible for every **SERM.**
Man to understand every Thing, which is **II.**
the Reason of Men's confining themselves
to particular Callings; so every Trade, e-
very Profession, ought to be look'd upon as
a publick Trust, for the Use and Benefit
of those who cannot be suppos'd to under-
stand those particular Mysteries; and the
Seller's Skill ought to be the Buyer's Secu-
rity. Whenever therefore we impose up-
on others, and take Advantage of Mens
Ignorance and Unskilfulness; and either
put that into their Hands for good which is
not so, or warrant it to be of that particu-
lar Sort or Make which it is not, or raise
it above the present Price and Value; we
betray that Trust which is reposed in us,
and transgress this Rule of Doing as we
would be done by.

4. In Religious Matters, This Rule obli-
ges us to give as much to others as we
take to our selves. If we would not have
our Religion, and the Way wherein we
worship God, evil spoken of, branded
with any infamous Character, or expos'd
to Scorn and Ridicule; neither must we
deal thus by the Religion of others. We
must

SERM. must give no Offence to the *Jew* or *Gentile*, tho' we may and ought to endeavour to convince and convert them.

II.

BUT then this must be done in the Spirit of Meekness, with great Temper, and good Reasoning ; for we are never to make a Jest of that wherein other People are serious, or reproach them for what they account their Religion. This is what no Man will take well from another, and therefore should never offer to another. Nor can such Treatment as this, ever have any good Effect: For what the Apostle tells us, has been confirmed by too much and sad Experience, that the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God.

IN Things of an indifferent Nature, by which I mean such Things as good Men may differ about, and yet be good, as being neither necessary to be believed nor practised in order to Salvation ; in Things of this Nature (tho' the hottest Disputes are generally about such Things) we are obliged to bear with one another, and to make Allowances for Difference of Opinions, Prejudices of Education, and the like.

like. We are not to think that all who differ from us must therefore be in the wrong, because we would not be thought in the wrong by every one from whom we differ. Much less ought we to be angry, and take it ill of others, that they do not believe as we; For they have the same Reason to be angry with us; And if we think they do ill in being angry with us, we cannot think that we do well.

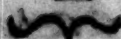
'Tis evident therefore that in all such Cases Men should be left to their natural Liberty and Freedom, that, in bearing with one another, they may fulfil this Rule of Doing as they would be done by.

Thus I have explained this Rule; and further illustrated it by instancing in some of the principal Cases wherein we are to practise it. I have been but brief in these, because it would be endless to run out into Particulars. And 'tis easy from those few Cases which I have put, to apply the Rule to any other that shall happen.

I proceed,

SERM.

II.



II. IN the *Second Place*, To show the great *Reasonableness* and *Equity* of this Rule:

AND here I need not use many Words, where the Case is self-evident, and carries with it Light and Conviction. There is no Man but will readily subscribe to the Reasonableness and Equity of this Rule; however he may fail in the Practice of it: And, whenever any Injury is done him, will be apt to ask the Person who did the Wrong, whether he would be content to be so served; and why he should be so unreasonable as to do that to another, which he would by no Means have done to himself.

If we would but descend into our selves, and examine our Hearts, we should find this to be the natural Language of them. Herein we all speak the same Thing: And there is no Man who is not presently convinc'd that he ought not to do that to another, which he should be unwilling in the like Circumstances to have done unto him.

INDEED this is one of those Precepts of SERM.
the Moral Law, which is evident by the II.
Light of Nature; and which therefore the
Heathens adopted into their Scheme, as
the Foundation of all Justice and Equity,
and the Rule and Measure of their Deal-
ings with one another.

Now the Equity and Reasonableness of
this Rule is founded in the Nature of Men;
who in many, and those the most materi-
al Things, are equal and upon a Level
with one another, and have therefore the
same Reason to expect the same Treat-
ment from one another.

WE had all the same Entrance into the
World, and must all have the same com-
mon Passage out of it. The Beginning
and End of all Men are the same; Dust
we are, and unto Dust we must return.
*Have we not all one Father? Hath not one
God created us? Why then do we deal
treacherously every Man against his Bro-
ther? Mal. 2. 10.* We are all made up
of the same Materials, the same constitu-
ent Parts of Soul and Body, which must
undergo a Dissolution, and then we must

SERM. all stand before the impartial Judgment of
 II. God.

WHILE we continue in this World, we have all the same Notions of Right and Wrong; the same Sense of Pleasure and Pain. We are all of us expos'd to some Wants or other, and encompass'd with Infirmities more or less. We are all obnoxious to, and in some measure dependent upon one another. We all love our selves, and pursue our own Happiness; and desire the Kindness and Assistance of others, whenever we come to want it.

Now where Men are thus equal, and upon a Level with one another; they should act upon the Square, and deal equally with one another. Here is a firmer Foundation for righteous and equitable Dealing in all these Things wherein Men agree, than there is for any injurious and unequal Treatment in those Things wherein they differ.

THE Things wherein Men differ from one another, are not so many as those wherein they agree; and if they were more, they are not so considerable. The Things

Things wherein Men differ from one another, are accidental, precarious, and mutable. Strength of Body, or Abilities of Mind, the Gifts of Nature or Fortune; our Stations and Employments, the Wealth and Power we have in the World; are but so many accidental Circumstances of our Being, and liable to innumerable Casualties and Uncertainties.

WHEREAS those Things wherein we all agree, are inseparable from us, and belong to human Kind. The Duties arising from these, and which are owing to us upon their Account; can never be cancelled, because the Foundation of them is immoveable. As long as we are Men, we have a Right to Justice and Mercy, Fidelity and Truth; to all kind and friendly Offices from all who partake of the same common Nature with our selves.

'Tis true indeed, the Things wherein we differ, claim their respective Duties. Superiors are to be honour'd and respected; Authority is to be submitted to, and obeyed; there is a Deference owing to great Wisdom, and long Experience. But then these Qualities which set Men above

SERM. others, do not discharge them from those
 II. Duties which are owing to those below
 them ; because they are but Men still, and
 have many Things in common with those
 below them, upon which Account they
 are but their Equals, and must allow them
 fair and equal Treatment.

A SUPERIOR is as much oblig'd to do
 me Justice, as if he were my Equal or In-
 ferior, because I have as good a Right to
 Justice as he ; (Men's different Stations
 making no Alterations in this,) And if he
 would think it hard to be injur'd and op-
 press'd by one Superior to him, 'tis e-
 qually unreasonable in him to deal thus by
 me.

POWER ought never to be us'd to con-
 troull or confound Right and Wrong ; and
 our Judgment of the Case should not be
 altered, where the Person only is chang'd.
 A Master or a Parent is obliged to the same
 Care and Tendernefs towards those below
 him, which he reasonably expected, when
 he was in a State of Minority and Subje-
 ction.

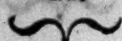
THE Reason of the Case holds eternal-
 ly the same ; and these relative Duties are

incapable of being cancelled by any SERM.
Change in Mens outward Circumstances II.
and Condition. Whatever at any Time
we think just and reasonable for Men to
do to us, That we are oblig'd to do to
them, whenever their Case comes to be
ours.

Do we expect Assistance of any Kind
from those who are able to give it us?
And do we think Misery and Want to be
of themselves a sufficient Plea for Succour
and Relief? We must think the same when-
ever any Applications of this Kind are
made to us. Mens Wants and Necessities
set them all upon a Level; and where-ever
they are found, have an equal Claim to be
consider'd by those who are able. In a
word, where-ever a Man has Right and
Justice on his Side, and can claim any
Thing as his due; or where-ever he has a
Title to Mercy and Compassion upon Ac-
count of his Wants and Infirmities; there
others are oblig'd to consider him as upon
a Level with themselves. And if I think
it reasonable that others should do me Ju-
stice, or show me Compassion, I must do
unto them likewise: For they have the

SERM.

II.



same Reason to expect this from me, as I have to look for it from them. And this may suffice to show the great Equity and Reasonableness of this Rule of Doing as we would be done by.

I COME now in the

III^d Place, To consider the peculiar *Advantages* of this Rule above any other.

I HAVE already shown, in the Explication of this Rule, that it is to be understood only of reasonable Requests, just and lawful Desires: Whatever we *thus* would have Men to do to us, That we must do unto them. So that in this Respect, the Rule amounts to no more than this; That we should deal justly, and do whatever is right and reasonable to others. But the Difficulty lies in determining what is just, what is right and reasonable in every Case that happens. For Men are Lovers of themselves, and very partial in their own Case. Self-love blinds our Eyes, and makes us see Things otherwise than they are, and judge amiss in Matters of Right and Wrong. *Nemini suae Injuriae levis*
viden-

videntur. The Injuries which are done SERM.
us, always appear great, and grievous to II.
be born : Whereas the Wrong which is
done to others, is look'd upon as light
and inconsiderable. We think one Thing
in another Man's Case; and when the Case
comes to be our own, we are of a different
Mind.

WE are apt to lessen and undervalue the
Circumstances of another Man's Condi-
tion, and to magnify and over-rate our
own. We look upon our selves and our
own Concernments to be greater and more
considerable by far than they are, and o-
ther Mens less than they truly are. Upon
these Accounts, if the Rule were laid
down only in general, That we should do
what is just and right to others, we should
often err in the Application of it; we
should be apt to determine in Favour of
our selves, and judge That to be just and
right in our own Case, which we would
not allow in the Case of others. Now to
prevent these Inconveniencies, and hinder
our Self-love and Partiality from pervert-
ing our Judgment; our Saviour bids us
make our own just Desires and reasonable

SERM. Expectations from others, the Rule and
 II. Measure of our Dealings with them. All

things whatsoever we would that Men should do unto us, we must do even so unto them. We are to change Places with every Man we have to deal with, and to make his Case our own: and what we would desire in that Case, the same we are to afford to him. We are to see with another Man's Eyes in our own Case, and with our own in another Man's. By this means we shall, in a great measure, be free from those Mists which Partiality and Self-love are apt to raise before our Eyes; we shall see things in their true Light and just Dimensions, and be able to discern what is the Right and Reason of the Case.

EVERY Man is quick-sighted in his own Case, and can presently tell what others ought to do to him. We can easily discern the Obliquity and Deformity of every base and injurious Action which is done us; and can presently tell where Men have been deficient towards us, and in what we have been the Sufferers. And therefore when our Saviour directs us to
 make

make other People's Case our own, and SERM.
to do to them what we would have II.
them do to us ; he directs us to a certain
Rule for determining any Differences
which may arise, and ascertaining every
Man's Right.

WERE we only commanded to deal
justly by others ; we should (as I said be-
fore) be at a Loss to know what was just.
And if we were left to our selves to be
the Judges in other Mens Cases, our own
Self-love would make That pass for a suffi-
cient Recompence, which was by no
Means a Satisfaction. But when he com-
mands us to make it our own Case, he
puts us in a ready Way of knowing what
is just, and what we are to do to o-
thers,

WE know what we would have done
to us in any particular Case, what Friend-
ship, what Offices we desire of others ;
what Recompence we should judge meet
in Case of any Wrong or Injury done us :
And this is what we are to do to others in
the like Circumstances. And this, I say,
will secure us (as much as may be) from
that Partiality which we should otherwise
be

SERM. be guilty of. For tho' we may be unreasonable in the Requests which we make to others, in the Satisfaction we expect for Offences committed against us, and the like; yet when the Case is made our own, when any sue to us for a Favour, or it comes to our Turn to make Reparation, we shall then have other Thoughts of the Matter, and our Judgment will be set right.

II.

AND therefore that we may apply this Rule with the greater Ease and Certainty, we must make it our Business diligently to observe the Motions and Workings of our own Minds, in every Condition of Life: how we then stand affected, and what Apprehensions we have of Things; what we then think of our selves, and what it is which we desire or expect from others. And all this we must endeavour to remember, when we are out of that Condition; we must still retain the same Sense of Things which we then had. This will instruct us fully how to demean our selves towards others in the like Circumstances.

THE Heart knoweth its own Bitter-
ness: And 'tis but asking our own Hearts
what we would have had done to us when
we were in the same or the like Condi-
tion; how we would have been treated by
others; and this will teach us how to deal
with our Brother.

SERM.
II.


To this Home-instructor our Saviour
sends us, to learn what we ought to do to
others. He makes every Man a Rule to
himself of his Proceedings with others, by
enjoining every Man to make his Neigh-
bours Case his own; and to do even so
to him, as he would be done unto by o-
thers.

THIS is a Rule which every Man car-
ries along with him, and has ready upon
all Occasions. This Word is nigh us, in
our Mouth, and in our Heart, that we
should do it. 'Tis a Rule which lies le-
vel to all Capacities. And they who can-
not find out their Duty by Thought and
Study, and are incapable of strict Reason
and Argument; may easily discover what
they ought to do by the Help of this Rule,
which carries Conviction along with it.

SERM. EVERY one knows what he would have
 II. others do to him in any Case that befalls
 him; and every one may soon be satisfied
 of the Reasonableness of doing the same to
 others.

AND Lastly, This is a Rule which in
 a Manner enforces it self, and brings along
 with it its own Motives to Practice. It
 turns our Bowels within us, by making our
 Brother's Case our own; and while it
 pleads for him, appeals to our own Sense
 of Misery and Want. It not only enjoyns
 us to do for others; but it enjoins us to do
 the very same Things, and for the very
 same Reason that we would have them
 done unto us. But this falls in with
 the

IVth. AND *Last Thing* I proposed,
 which was to *perswade* you to the Prac-
 tice of this Rule, to do unto others as ye
 would have them do unto you.

AND the 1st Argument I shall use to
 press the Practice of this Rule, shall be the
 great and apparent Equity and Reasona-
 bleness of it.

THIS

THIS Argument ought to weigh with us SERM²
as we are reasonable Creatures. What- II.
ever recommends it self to our Reason,
and is indisputably fit and just to be done,
ought to be readily comply'd with by rea-
sonable Creatures. Now there is nothing
which has clearer or stronger Reason on
its Side, than this great Rule. It has uni-
versal Consent and Approbation, and there-
fore ought to obtain universally in Practice.
The Reasonableness of Some moral Pre-
cepts has been doubted of by some, and
deny'd by others : But this never met with
any Opposition. It is indeed the Foundati-
on of all Justice between Man and Man ;
the Ground and Support of all the Duties
we owe to one another. So that as long as
Men bear any Relation, or lye under any
Obligation to one another ; this Precept
will stand firm and unshaken. Our Savi-
our tells us, that it makes a chief Part of
that which was always held for Religion
in the World : He styles it *the Law and the*
Propbets, the Sum of all that has been
delivered concerning our Duty to one ano-
ther.

SERM. II. WE meet with several moral Precepts of the same Import, among Heathen Writers; and 'tis reported of the Emperor *Severus*, that he borrowed this Saying from the Christians; that he was so pleased with it, that he had it written upon his Palace, and in all publick Places, and highly reverenc'd Christ and Christianity for it. So that to refuse to be govern'd by this Rule, of doing to others as we would have them do to us; To exercise Cruelty where we our selves should look for Compassion; To overreach and defraud others where we expect to be justly dealt with, and to have our due; To be liberal of our Neighbours good Name and Reputation, while we are extremely tender of our own: I say, to transgress this Rule in these and such like Instances, is to disclaim all Reason, to undermine the Foundation of all Justice, and to make our selves worse than the Sinners of the Gentiles, worse than Heathens and Publicans.

2. THE Observation of this great Rule, does very much tend to promote our Happiness and Safety in this present Life.

FOR

FOR every Man to do as he would be SERM.
done by, is every Man's firmest Tenure, II.
and best Security, for his own Peace and

Quiet. 'Tis the Practice of this Rule that must uphold the World, and keep it from falling into a Chaos and Confusion. For whoever takes upon him to transgress this Rule, to act unreasonably, and carry it with an high and arbitrary Hand towards others; must expect to meet with the same Treatment in his Turn.

As we deal, so shall we be dealt with; The same Measure that we mete with, shall be measured to us again, says our Blessed Saviour. This is what frequently happens in the natural Course of Things. Deceitful Dealing, and injurious Treatment, is what the Generality of Men abhor; and they who make it their Business to defraud and abuse others, do but teach others to deal in like manner with them, whenever they have an Opportunity. And Men in the Course of their Dealings with one another, seldom fail of finding an Opportunity of paying one another in their own Coin. So that he who ventures upon the Breach of this Rule, exasperates
Men's

SERM. Men's Spirits against him, and lays a

II. Temptation in their Way to transgress the Rule likewise, and make Reprisals upon him. And there are few Men so cunning, but they meet with their Match in some Kind or other; and the Injuries which they do others, are return'd upon their own Heads. And this is the true Source of all those Differences and Contentions we see amongst Men; They arise from a Neglect of this Rule, of doing as they would be done by. This is the Reason of Men's interfering and clashing with one another. For if we would be perswaded to live by this Rule of Equity, we should quickly find the Advantages of it: Since, though some Men might be so barbarous as to fall upon others unprovok'd, and without any manner of Cause; yet, generally speaking, we should meet with better Treatment. The Grounds of most Quarrels would be removed, the Condition of Mankind would be much better'd, and we should see the World a quieter Habitation than it is. *Mercy and Truth would meet together, Righteousness and Peace would kiss each other.*

3dly. and Lastly, THE strict Observa-
tion of this Rule, is the most effectual
way we can take, to recommend our selves
to the Blessing and Favour of Almighty
God.

SERM.
II.


BESIDES the natural Course of Things;
according to which (as I have already ob-
served) we shall best consult our present
Safety and Happiness by following this
Rule; the Providence of God does many
times interpose, and so order Things, as to
bring the Injustice and Injury which we do
to others, upon our selves; and to reward
our just and righteous Dealings, with tem-
poral Prosperity and Success.

WHEN *a Man's Ways please the Lord,*
(says Solomon, Prov. 16. 7.) *he maketh*
even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.
And there is nothing more pleasing to
God, than our treating Men upon this
equal foot. There is so much real Good-
ness, so much of the very Temper of God
in the Practice of this Rule, as cannot but
be highly pleasing to him. God is just and
righteous in all his Ways, full of Pity and
Tendernefs, Mercy and Compassion; And
so is the Man who governs himself by this

SERM.

II.

Rule, who makes every Man's Case his own, and does that to others which he would have done unto himself. And God will never suffer any Man to be a Loser, or to fare the worse, for the Kindness and Compassion which he shows to others. Such do often receive an hundred fold in this Life; but however that be, they will not fail of being recompenc'd at the Resurrection of the Just. If we observe this great Rule of Right, we shall be justify'd when-ever God calls us to Examination, and puts us upon giving an Account of our selves. He that has show'd Mercy, shall find Mercy of the Lord in that Day; and he shall have Judgment without Mercy, that has show'd no Mercy.

THIS Rule will hold out at the long run, and determine our final Condition. The Measure that we now give to others, shall then be measur'd to us; and the same Treatment which Men meet with at our Hands, we shall meet with at the Hands of the Living God.

'Tis with great Reason therefore, that the Apostle gives us this Caution;
1 Thess. 4. 6. Let no Man go beyond, or

would be done by.

67

defraud his Brother in any Matter, be- SERM.
cause the Lord is the Avenger of all such. II:

He will take their Cause into his own Hands, and render to us according to our Dealings with one another.

This Proceeding of God, in dealing with us, as we deal with one another ; is set forth in a very lively and affecting manner in that Parable, which we meet with in the latter Part of the 18th of St. *Matthew* ; where we find a wicked Servant, who had just had a signal Piece of Mercy shown him by his Lord, in forgiving him a large Debt because he desired it ; I say, we find this Servant immediately falling foul upon his Fellow-Servant, and, notwithstanding all his Entreaties and Promises, casting him into Prison for a small inconsiderable Debt. Upon which, his Lord thus expostulates with him ; *O thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me : Shouldst not thou also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had Pity on thee ? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the Tormentors ; 'till he should pay all that was due*

F 2

into

SERM. *unto him:* The Application our Saviour
 II. makes of this, we read in the following
 Words, which may serve as a Conclusion
 of all that has been said; *So likewise shall
 my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if
 ye from your Hearts forgive not every one
 his Brother their Trespases.*





THE
NEW CREATURE.



GAL. VI. 15.

*For in Christ Jesus, neither
Circumcision availeth any
Thing, nor Uncircumcision,
but a New Creature.*

THE Apostle's chief Design SERM.
in this Epistle, was to keep III.
the Galatians from heark-
ning to those Judaizing Se-
ducer, who had almost per-
swaded them to be circumcised, and to
submit to all the ritual Observances of the
Jewish Church, as necessary under the
Gospel.

SERM.

III.

THIS Design he prosecutes at large and opposes their being circumcis'd, and subjecting themselves to the Law of *Moses*, by a great Variety of Arguments; and then closes his Epistle, and winds up all with several Admonitions, which show'd that he had a different End and Aim in preaching the Gospel to them, than the others had in perswading them to be circumcis'd.

THEY constrain'd them to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ, *v. 12. i. e.* to avoid Persecution for owning their Dependance for Salvation solely upon a crucify'd Messiah, and not on the Observances of the Law.

THEY desired to have them circumcised, that they might glory in their Flesh; that this Mark in the Flesh might afford them Matter of Glorifying, and of recommending themselves to the good Opinion of the Jews, *v. 13.*

BUT, says the Apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucify'd unto me, and I unto the World,* *v. 14.* As for me, whatever may be said

saïd of me, God forbid that I should glory in any Thing, but in having Jesus Christ, who was crucify'd, for my sole Lord and Master, whom I am to obey and depend on; and which I so entirely do, without regard to any Thing else, that I am wholly dead to the World, and the World to me, and it has no more Influence on me than if it were not.

FOR in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision; i. e. As to the obtaining a Share in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the Privileges and Advantages of it, neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, nor any such outward Differences in the Flesh, or external Performances; but the new Creation, wherein, by a thorough Change, a Man is disposed to Righteousness and true Holiness, in good Works.

In discoursing upon these Words, I shall,

I. EXPLAIN this Phrase of a New Creature, or a New Creation.

SERM.

III.



II. I shall show that this is the Condition which the Gospel requires of us, in Order to our Salvation. And,

III. I shall show the great Reasonableness of this Condition:

I. To explain this Phrase of a new Creature, or a New Creation.

'Tis evident that this is a metaphorical Expression, and is used to describe to us that Change and Alteration which Christianity, when firmly believed and sincerely practis'd, will, through the Grace of God, make in Men's Hearts and Lives; a Change so thorough and so great, that it may well be compar'd to a new or second Birth; and the Persons, in whom this Change is made, may be said to be new Men, to be different and quite other Persons from what they were before.

THE same Expression is us'd in common Forms of Speech, to denote any great Change or Alteration in our outward Circumstances and Condition. Thus we usually say of one who is recover'd from a bad State of Health, and an ill Habit of Body, or who has retriev'd his Fortune in the

the World; that he is quite another Person, *SERM.*
a perfect new Man; and that we should *III.*
scarce know him again; and the like. So,
the inward Change and Alteration which
Christianity makes in us, the thorough
Reformation which it works in the Frame
and Temper of our Minds, and in the
Course and Actions of our Lives; is repre-
sented by our being new Creatures. This
Change is set forth in Scripture, by
a great Variety of Phrases to the same
Purpose; by Conversion, and turning
from our Iniquities unto God; by Repen-
tance from dead Works; by Resurrection
from the Dead, being born again, and ri-
sing to Newness of Life; by being renew-
ed in the Spirit of our Minds; putting off
the Old Man, and putting on the New
Man, &c.

THIS Change is most visible in the first
Conversion of Men from Heathenism to
Christianity, or from a Life of Sin and
Wickedness to a Life of Piety and Virtue.
When such as these effectually embrace
Christianity, and set home upon their
Hearts those Motives and Considerations
with which the Gospel of Christ will fur-
nish

SERM.

III.

nish them ; they are quite different Men, and their Ways of a quite contrary Fashion from what they were before. They act upon different Principles, are sway'd by other Interests, have other Ends and Designs in View, take different Measures, have other Notions and Opinions of Things, form different Prospects and Projects, and steer quite a contrary Course to what they did before.

FOR whereas before, they consulted only their present Ease and Pleasure, studied the Gratification of their sensual Lusts and Appetites, and gave themselves up to the Interests of this Life, the Welfare of the Body, and the Concerns of this World ; They now mortify their Members which are upon the Earth, endeavour to subdue their Passions, and to get above the Body, and above the World ; They are now govern'd by Reason, and not by Sense ; They walk by Faith and not by Sight ; and the World is crucify'd to them, and they to the World. They calculate all their Actions for Eternity, and are not so much concern'd at what befalls them here, as what shall become of them here-

hereafter. In a word, they are new mould-
ed and fashioned, formed over again, and
created as it were a-new, by being fur-
nished with a new Principle of Life and
Action, engag'd in new Courses, and put
upon new Designs and Undertakings.
They have new Objects of their Hopes
and Fears, of their Love and Hatred; new
Thoughts and Sentiments of Things, and
new Rules for the Conduct of their Lives
and Actions. *Old Things are passed a-
way, and all Things are become new* to
them; and they are even new to them-
selves as well as others: upon which Ac-
counts they may fitly be stiled New Crea-
tures, or a New Creation.

Now though (as I said before) this
Change is most visible in the Conversion
of Heathens to Christianity, or of wicked
Professors of Christianity to a Conversa-
tion becoming the Gospel of Christ; and
it may be truly affirmed of such, that they
are new Creatures, different Men from
what they were, and scarce to be known
for the same Persons; yet the Effect of
Christianity truly believed, and duly
practis'd, is the same upon those who were
nei-

SERM.
III.

SERM. neither Heathens, nor wicked Christians,
 III. but were born of Christian Parents, and
 brought up in a Christian Country, and
 had the Happiness of a virtuous Education,
 and were never engag'd in vicious Courses.

SUCH as these, I say, though they cannot so properly be called New Creatures when compared with themselves, because they were always what they are, except the Progress and Improvement which they daily make in Virtue; yet, when compar'd with others, they may be so called. They are New Creatures, different Men, and of another sort from those, who either never heard of the Gospel, or never firmly believed and practis'd it.

So that still the Design of Christianity is the same, to make us New Creatures, quite other Men from what we should have been without the Gospel; to cure the Corruption and Depravity of Human Nature, and restore it to the Image of the Divine Nature, in which Man was at first created, and from which by Transgression he fell. But this will come more properly under my next Head. But before I proceed to that, it will be necessary to make two, or three

brief

brief Observations upon what has been al-
ready said. SERM.
III.

1st. If this be a true Explication of this Phrase of a New Creature; if no more be meant by it, than to express that inward Change, and thorough Reformation which Christianity makes in us; if this be the main Thing intended by this Metaphor; and the Similitude between the proper and figurative Signification of *a New Creature*, lies in this; then, to stretch the Metaphor further, and to conclude something parallel in the State of a Christian, to every Thing which can properly be affirmed of *a New Creature*; is to run upon such wild and absurd Consequences, as any wise Man would be asham'd to own, and any good Man would be afraid to fasten upon the Scriptures.

AND yet the Scriptures have been thus wrested and perverted by foolish and wicked Men unto their own Destruction. Thus, because that Change which Christianity makes in our State and Condition, is represented in Scripture by a new Creation, a second Birth, being born again, and rising to a new Life; some have inferred, that
this

SERM. this second and spiritual Birth must in all

III.

Respects answer our first and natural Birth. And therefore as we were purely passive in the Work of our Creation ; as that was the Effect of Omnipotence, of the almighty and irresistible Power of God ; as that was done in an Instant, in a Moment of Time, (for God no sooner said, Let it be, but it was so ;) so in the Work of our Regeneration, in our being born again, *i. e.* in our becoming true Converts to Christianity, and being sincerely good and virtuous, we are purely passive, and can contribute nothing towards it our selves ; That this inward Change is the Effect of irresistible Grace ; That it is done in an Instant ; And that as we were *at once* brought out of nothing into Being, so, all on a sudden, we become good Christians, we know not how, nor why.

BUT these and such like Opinions, besides that they are contrary to the whole Tenor of Scripture, as well as to common Sense, Reason, and Experience ; cannot be supported by any such Metaphors as this in the Text, *of a New Creature* ; because the Metaphor, as I have already shown,

shown, is sufficiently answered and absol-
ved by that great Change and Alteration
which Christianity makes in us, without
extending it to other Particulars.

SERM.

III.

2dly. HENCE it appears how vain and
idle it is for Men to trouble others, or
themselves, about the exact Time of their
Conversion ; and to be disturbed and unea-
sy if they cannot assign the very Moment
when they commenc'd good and virtuous
Persons.

FOR though, as I before observed, this
Change is most sensible in the Conversion
of Heathens to Christianity, or of very
wicked Men to a holy and religious Life: Yet
even there, the Change is mostly wrought
after an imperceptible manner, by slow
Steps and Degrees ; and we feel it very
sensibly when it is grown up to any con-
siderable Greatness, tho' we were not pri-
vy to all the progressive Motions towards
it.

"Tis impossible to assign the exact Mo-
ment when the Night ends and the Day
begins, or to draw a Line which shall
part the Light from the Darkeness. The
Day begins in an insensible Dawn, and

the

SERM. *the Path of the Just shines more and more unto a perfect Day*, Prov. 4. 18.

III.

Men do not become very good or very bad in an Instant: Both virtuous and vicious Habits are acquired by Length of Time, and repeated Acts. And the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* Christianity, is compared to Leaven hid in so many Measures of Meal; to a Grain of Mustard Seed; and to a Field sown with Corn, &c. All which Things do not obtain their several Effects in an Instant, or at any particular Time which we can fix on. We cannot say, the Leaven work'd just that Moment; or that Minute the Mustard Seed shot up into a Tree; or the Corn appear'd above Ground at that very Instant.

IN like Manner, if the Gospel of Christ has its due Effect upon us, and we find the Fruits of it in our Hearts and Lives, it is sufficient; though we cannot assign the exact Article of Time, either the Hour, or the Day, when we began to mend and become better.

MUCH less can any particular Time be assigned for this, in those who have known

known Christianity from their Youth, and **SERMON**
were carefully brought up in the Practice **III.**
of it. In both Cases, and indeed in all
others, if we feel the Influence of the Gos-
pel upon our Hearts, and see the Fruits of
it in our Lives; we need not trouble our
selves with enquiring into the Time
when these Things began to be; For that
is what we need not, and in many Cases
cannot know.

3^{dly}. If it be thus insignificant to en-
quire into the exact Time of our Conver-
sion, or new Birth; 'tis equally so, to ex-
amine the particular Occasion of it.

THERE are many providential Occur-
rences which put Men upon serious Thought
and Reflection, and thereby prove the
Occasion of their breaking off their Sins,
and returning to a better Mind. These,
in some Cases, are so remarkable, that
they cannot escape our Notice: But, ge-
nerally speaking, the Beginnings of the
spiritual Life are as small and insensible as
those of the natural; and we cannot dis-
cern the first Spring that put us into Moti-
on, and set us on work.

SERM. THE Wind bloweth where it listeth;
 III. and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but
 canst not tell whence it cometh, and whe-
 ther it goeth: so is every one that is born
 of the Spirit. John 3. 8.

THE particular way or manner of the Spirit's Operation upon us, and the Means it makes use of to produce this Change and Alteration in us, wherein our new Birth consists; is, for the most Part, unaccountable to us. Yet as long as we feel the Effects of the Spirit, in the Attainment of Christian Piety and Virtue; as long as we are sensible that there is a Change made in us for the better, this ought to satisfy us, though we should be unable to discover the particular and immediate Cause and Occasion of this Change.

4thly. HENCE it appears what sort of Proof or Evidence we should expect of our new Creation. For since this Change is generally wrought in us gently and gradually, by slow Steps and insensible Degrees; tis not necessary that it should always be accompany'd with great Terrors of Mind, and Pangs of Conscience, with inward Fear and Dread, and Astonishment

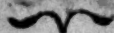
of Heart. For though this may sometimes be the Case of great and notorious Sinners, who are awakened to a Sense of their Danger by some signal Providences, or strong and suddain Impressions made upon their Minds; yet this is not the common and ordinary Method of God's reclaiming Men from their Sins. He works upon us by more silent and insensible Degrees, and speaks to us in a still or small Voice. SERM. III.

MUCH less can any such violent Pangs and Struglings be expected in those whose Education has been in the Ways of Piety and Virtue, and who therefore are not to pass from a State of Sin to a State of Holiness, but to go on, and improve in that State wherein they already are.

So that we need not disquiet our selves, or distrust our own State, because no strange Thing has happen'd to us; because we have not been frighted and terrify'd; nor felt any violent inward Pangs and Convulsions. For Religion has nothing of this Kind in it. 'Tis easy and natural, pleasant and delightful; unless we have made it otherwise by contrary Habits and Customs; And even then we may be recon-

SERM.

III.



cil'd to it again, and habituate our selves to it by Degrees, without any of this unnatural Dread, and Terror, and Concern.

AND if we find, in fact, that the Principles of Grace and Goodness prevail over our vicious Inclinations; that we gain Ground of our Sins, and improve our Virtues; that, upon the whole, we are really better than we were before, less prone to those Vices we had indulg'd, and more inclin'd to those Virtues which we formerly neglected; This new Creation is actually begun in us, and, if we sincerely go on with it, we shall at last be new Creatures, *created again in Christ Jesus unto good Works.*

HAVING thus explain'd this Phrase of a *New Creature*; and guarded against some Mistakes which Men have run into, by too strict an Interpretation of this Metaphor. I proceed in the *Second Place*,

II. To show, that this is the *Condition* which the Gospel requires of us in Order to Salvation.

FOR

FOR in Christ Jesus, neither Circum-
 cision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircum-
 cision, but a New Creature.

SERM.
 III.


CHRISTIANITY has abolished the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewish Law : Not by any express Prohibition ; there was no Occasion for that : But as the Law was a temporary Institution, design'd only for one peculiar Nation, and for that Nation only for a certain Time, 'till a more perfect Religion should be set up, which was to be the Religion not only of that Nation, but of the whole World ; So whenever that Religion came to take place, the Law, with all its Rites and Ceremonies, was to cease of Course, and to be laid aside.

THE Apostle tells us, that *the Law was our School-master, to bring us to Christ.* It was but preparatory and introductory to Christianity ; and the greatest Part of its Rites and Ceremonies, even Circumcision it self, were but Types and Shadows of that Purity and Perfection which Christianity was to enjoin : And the Substance being then come, the Shadow of it self vanish'd. When that which is

SERM. perfect was come, all these imperfect
 III. Things were to be done away. Neither
 the Observance of these Things would
 then help forward, nor the Neglect of
 them hinder Men's Salvation. They were
 altogether useless to this End; and in this
 Respect, the Jew had no Advantage over
 the Gentile. It matter'd not what Nation
 or Religion Men were of, before their em-
 bracing Christianity; provided, when they
 embraced it, they fulfill'd the Conditions
 of it, and became new Creatures.

FOR this is the great End and Design
 of the Gospel, and the Condition upon
 which eternal Life and Happiness depends.
 This is evident from the whole Tenor of
 the New Testament, and is legible in al-
 most every Page of that Book.

IN chap. 5. of this Epistle, ver. 6.
*In Jesus Christ, neither Circumcision a-
 vaileth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision,
 but Faith which worketh by Love: Faith*
 that is inspir'd and acted, consummate and
 made perfect by Charity.

AGAIN, 1 Cor. 7. 19. *Circumcision is
 nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing;
 but the keeping of the Commandments of
 God.*

AND

AND to name no more, 2 Cor. 5. 17. SERM. III.
If any Man be in Christ Jesus, if any Man be a true Christian, he is a New Creature.

THERE is no Occasion for much Time, or many Words to show, that the great End and Design of Christianity, is to influence our Hearts, and renew our Minds, and reform our Lives and Actions: That this is the Condition which it requires of us; and that if it has not this Effect upon us, it will profit us nothing.

THIS is plain from the Precepts of the Gospel, which are Precepts of the greatest Purity and Perfection, which do not only tie up our Hands from working Evil, but lay a Restraint upon our Thoughts, and forbid all Love and Affection, all Desire and Delight in Sin and Wickedness. To which End we are promised the inward Aid and Assistance of the Spirit of God. We are said to be born of the Spirit, and to have it dwelling in us, to be lead by it, and to walk after it. All which Expressions sufficiently speak our inward Reformation and Amendment, the purifying and cleansing of our Hearts, the renewing of

SERM. our Minds, and the Sanctification of the
 III. Inner Man. The same Truth appears
 from the Promises and Threats of the Gospel; all which are calculated to work upon our Hopes and Fears, and thereby to deter us from Sin, and perswade us to Virtue.

EVERY Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure: Having therefore these Promises, dearly Beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. And the Gospel is stil'd the Power of God unto Salvation, because therein the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men. Even the positive Institutions of Christianity, have the same End and Design, and are altogether useless if they do not attain it.

St. PETER tells us, 1 Epistle, ch. 3. 21. *That Baptism doth now save us; But that we might not mistake him, he adds, that it is not the external Ceremony of Washing with Water, not the putting away the Filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good*

good Conscience towards God, i. e. the Sti-
 SERM. 2
 pulation or Promise, the Sponſion or En-
 III.
 gagement of a good Conſcience, of keep-
 ing a Conſcience void of Offence towards
 God and towards Man, of living agree-
 ably to the Laws of the Goſpel, of being
 buried with Chriſt in Baptiſm, and riſing
 to Newneſs of Life.

AND ſo for the Lord's Supper, the A-
 poſtle puts the Queſtion, 1 Cor. 10. 16.

*The Cup of Bleſſing which we bleſs, is it
 not the Communion of the Blood of Chriſt?*

*The Bread which we break, is it not the
 Communion of the Body of Chriſt?*

THEY who drink of the Cup of Bleſ-
 ſing which we bleſs in the Lord's Supper,
 do they not thereby partake of the Bene-
 fits purchaſed by Chriſt's Blood ſhed for
 them upon the Croſs, which they here
 ſymbolically drink? and they who eat of
 the Bread broken there, do they not par-
 take in the Sacrifice of the Body of Chriſt,
 and profeſs to be Members of him?

BUT how are the Benefits of Chriſt's
 Death to be obtained? Not by the bare
 outward Act of eating Bread and drinking
 Wine; but by believing in him, and obey-
 ing

SER. M. ing his Commands, by taking him for our
 III. Lord and Master, and giving our selves
 up entirely to his Service.

For as often as we approach this Table, we profess that we belong to Christ, that we are of his Family, his Servants, and Disciples; And this plainly implies, that we should conform our selves to his holy Will and Pleasure, and observe those Laws which he has given us.

WITHOUT this, all the outward Profession we can possibly make of our Religion, will avail us nothing; and our Saviour may justly reply to us, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which I say?* Luke 6. 46.

For though Religion cannot subsist without Externals, yet it does not consist in them; but is seated in the Heart and Affections, in the inner Man, in a divine Frame of Mind, and a Godlike Temper of Soul. And tho' none of the external Ordinances of the Gospel are to be neglected, yet they are not to be finally rested in, without attending to their proper Meaning and Signification, and the End for which they were instituted: And That was,

The New Creature.

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to separate us from a wicked World, and SERM. 2
make us a new Heart and a new Spirit, III
to purify and cleanse us from all Iniquity,
and to furnish us thoroughly unto every
good Work.

THIS the Apostle represents as the great
Design of Christianity, *Tit. 2, 11, 12. The*
Grace of God, i. e. the Gospel of Christ,
that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared
unto all Men; teaching us, that denying
Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should
live soberly, righteously, and godly in this
present World. And he further tells us,
ver. 14. that Christ gave himself for us,
with this Design, that he might redeem
us from all Iniquity, and purify unto him-
self a peculiar People, zealous of good
Works.

I COME now in the *Third Place,*

III. To show the great *Reasonable-*
ness of this Condition, of our being new
Creatures, in order to our obtaining any
Share or Inheritance in the Kingdom of
Heaven.

Now That is certainly a reasonable Con-
dition, which is necessary, and without

SERM. which we can never obtain the End we
 III. aim at. And such is the Condition here in
 the Text. Without being born again, and
 becoming new Creatures; without mortifying our Members which are upon the Earth, our corrupt Passions, our sensual and worldly Affections, and being renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and accustomed to a divine and heavenly Life, by our Christian Faith and Practice; we shall not be fit for the Kingdom of God, nor meet to be made *Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. We cannot be admitted to the Happiness of a future State; or if we should find an Entrance thither, we shall meet with no suitable Satisfaction in it.

THE Necessity of this Condition, is frequently press'd upon us in Scripture. Our Saviour tells *Nicodemus*, that *except a Man be born again, born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, John, 3. 3, 5. And the Author to the *Hebrews*, chap. 12. v. 14. assures us, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*. And in the Book of the *Revelation*, where we have a Description

tion of the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, *Job. 21. SERM.*
v. 27. 'tis expressely said; that there shall III
in no wise enter into it, any Thing that
defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abo-
mination, or maketh a Lye. And again,
ver. 14. of the last Chapter, Blessed
are they that do his Commandments, that
they may have Right to the Tree of Life,
and may enter in thro' the Gates into the
City.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is a Kingdom
 wherein dwelleth Righteousness; 'tis a
 State of Purity and Perfection; and the
 Happiness of that State consists in seeing
 God, and being like him, and living for
 ever in his Presence, in the Society of
 Saints and Angels, and the Spirits of just
 Men made perfect. And our Employment
 will be the contemplating and adoring of
 our great Creator, singing Praises to him
 that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the
 Lamb for ever and ever; expressing all
 possible Love and Gratitude to God,
 and the highest Charity and Affection to
 one another.

Thus, though it does not yet appear,
 what we shall be, and we know but few

Parti-

SERM 2 Particulars of the World to come; yet
III we know in general, that the Company,
 the Employment, and the Happiness of that
 State, are of a pure and Spiritual Nature,
 very different from any Thing here below,
 and directly contrary to the sinful Plea-
 sures and sensual Enjoyments of the Men
 of this World.

And therefore if we would be Parta-
 kers of the Resurrection of the Just, if we
 would be number'd among the Saints, and
 bear a Part in the Business and Employ-
 ment, the Joys and Pleasures of a future
 State; we must qualify and prepare our-
 selves for it by weaning our Affections
 from a Love of this World and the Things
 that are in it, by cleansing our Hearts from
 all inordinate Passions, subduing our Lusts,
 and conquering the vicious Inclinations of
 our corrupt Nature; by acquiring good
 and virtuous Habits and Dispositions of
 Mind; a holy Frame and Temper of
 Soul; and renewing our selves Day by
 Day after the Image of him that created
 us, and the Likeness of him that redeem-
 ed us.

CHRIST

CHRIST must be thus formed and fash-
ion'd in us, and his Life transplanted into
ours. In this sense we must bear the I-
mage of the Heavenly, before we can be
admitted into that Place; and must be natu-
raliz'd to it, by conforming to the Customs
and Manners which are there in Use, and
by observing those Laws which govern all
Things there, the Laws of universal Right-
teousness and Goodness.

By this means we shall become New
Creatures, belong to a new Creation, and
be fit to be Inhabitants of the *Jeru-
salem* which is above. But without this,
we shall be perfect Strangers when we
come thither, and shall find every Thing
so contrary to what we have been accu-
stomed to here, that we shall meet with
no agreeable Society there, nor any Thing
else wherein we can take any Pleasure.
We shall neither know God, nor be
known by him; he will be so unlike to us,
and we to him, that it will be impossible
for us to take Pleasure in each other.
Our Manners and Dispositions will be as
contrary to those of that Place, as Light
is to Darkness, and this will undermine

the

SEEN the Foundation of all our Happiness: For

III. all delightful Communion is founded in the
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 Similitude and Agreement of Manners and Dispositions; and where this is wanting, there will be perpetual Jarring and Discord. So that Heaven it self, with all the blessed Company which fills it, and all the Joys and Glories with which it abounds, will administer no Satisfaction to an earthly, sensual, and worldly Mind, nor make the Man truly Happy.

'Tis upon this Necessity of the Thing, that those Precepts are founded, which enjoin us to be holy as God is holy, merciful as he is merciful, and perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect: Because, without this, we can never see God, nor have any Enjoyment of him.

AND this must be done in this Life: 'tis that Work which God has given every Man to do, and now is the only Time of doing it; *to Day while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin; or lest the Night cometh, when no Man can work.* For such Dispositions as we have contracted in this

World, will stick close to us, and accom-  
pany us into another. And Death, tho'  
it makes a great and amazing Change in  
our Bodies, will make no Alteration in  
the main State of our Souls; but *he that  
was unjust, will be unjust still; and he  
that was filthy, will be filthy still; and  
he that was righteous, will be righteous  
still; and he that was holy, will be holy  
still*, Rev. 22. 11.

And therefore we must make it our con-  
stant Business and Employment, the great  
Care and Study of our whole Lives, to  
partake of this new Creation, to make  
ourselves new Creatures, to rescue our-  
selves from this Bondage of Corruption into  
the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God;  
to have the Life of Christ formed in us,  
that *when he who is our Life shall ap-  
pear, we also may appear with him in  
Glory*, and be admitted to the eternal Vi-  
sion and Fruition of God, and the Enjoy-  
ment of those Things which God hath  
prepared for Them that love him.

VOL. II.

H

The



The Blessedness of them  
who have not seen, and  
yet have believed.



JOHN. XX. 29.

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas,  
because thou hast seen me,  
thou hast believed: Blessed  
are they that have not seen,  
and yet have believed.*

SERM.  
IV.



THESE Words of our Savi-  
our to *Thomas*, were occa-  
sioned by *Thomas's* refusing  
to believe our Saviour's Re-  
surrection upon the Testimo-  
ny of the other Disciples, who affirmed  
that



*The Blessedness of Believers.* 99

that they had seen him alive again after he SERM.  
had been dead, and had full Proof given IV.  
them that it was he himself, and not another, nor any mere Imagination or Delusion.

For thus the Evangelist relates it, *ver. 19, &c. The same Day at Evening, being the first Day of the Week, when the Doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for Fear of the Jews; came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his Hands and his Feet. Then were the Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. But Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. The other Disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord; and related the Matter to him at large, as is highly probable by his insisting upon the same ocular Proof and sensible Demonstration which They had, before he would believe it himself. But he said unto them, except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, I will not believe.*

SERM.

IV.

OUR Saviour condescended to this, and gave him the Proof which he insisted on! *For after eight Days, again his Disciples were within, and Thomas with them: Then came Jesus in the same Manner as before; and saith to Thomas, Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side: and be not faithless, but believing.* Where he plainly reproves Thomas for his Infidelity; and shows that he ought not to have laid so little Stress upon the Testimony of his Fellow-Disciples, since That was sufficient to confirm the Truth of his Resurrection.

THOMAS, being now fully satisfied in his own Way, and according to his own Desire; proclaim'd his Conviction, and said, *My Lord, and my God.* Upon which our Saviour advances a general Doctrine concerning two different Sorts of Faith, and their different Virtue or Merit. *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Because thou hast seen and felt me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the Dead:

Dead: Blessed are they, who, without **SERM.**  
such Evidence of Sense, shall upon credible **IV.**  
Testimony, be willing to believe and  
embrace a Doctrine, which tends so greatly  
to the Glory of God, and the Salvation  
of Men.

OUR SAVIOUR does not indeed reprove  
*Thomas's* Faith; neither does he commend  
it, nor attribute any Virtue to it, because  
it was built upon the Testimony of his Sen-  
ses, which was the highest Evidence, and  
such as could not be resisted. What we  
see with our Eyes, and our Hands handle,  
we cannot but believe. But our Saviour  
gives the Preference to another Sort of  
Faith, and most justly allows it greater  
Praise and Commendation; and that is,  
Faith grounded upon credible Testi-  
mony.

I SHALL treat of both these Sorts of  
Faith, but chiefly of the Latter;  
and then make some Use of what  
shall be said.

I. OF that Faith or Belief, which is  
founded upon the Testimony of Sense.



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IV.

THIS is improperly called Faith; for Faith is the Evidence of Things not seen; And the Evidence of Sense is more clear and unquestionable than that of Faith. And therefore though Men may be happy in the Effects of this Faith, as the Apostles no doubt were; yet there is no Praise, no Reward belonging to this Faith which is wrought by so violent and irresistible an Evidence.

THOMAS, *because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed*; q. d. 'Tis no such great Matter, that you believe me to be raised from the Dead; you are convinced of it by your Senses, by the concurrent Testimony of several of them. Your Eyes, and Ears, and Hands do all join in giving you full Evidence of the Truth of my Resurrection. So that if you can but tell whether you hear my Voice, and see my Shape, and feel my Wounds, and are able to distinguish between dead and alive; you cannot stand out, nor do otherwise than believe.

THE Testimony of Sense, and rigid Demonstration, are irresistible Proofs; such as oblige us to yield the Assent of our Understandings,

derstandings, and in a manner compel us SERM.  
to it, and extort it from us \*. The Power IV.

of such Proof is irresistible ; it will not suffer the Mind to remain in Doubt or Suspence, but with a superior Authority exacts its Assent, and reduces it to a Compliance. Instead of exerting a contrary Act of Dissent, we cannot abide indifferent in such a Case as this ; but yield we must, though it be never so contrary to our Inclinations. The Reason is, from the specifical Nature of such Sorts of Proofs as these. The Evidence of Sense is the strongest that is possible. And Mathematical Demonstrations are drawn from uncontested Principles, such as are deeply radicated in the Mind, and perfectly congenial with it ; so that they assault us with something drawn from the inmost Recesses of our Constitution, and make their Way into us with infinite Speed and Easiness.

BUT there is no Virtue or Praise due to that Belief which is grounded upon these Proofs, because it requires no Pains to be

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con-

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\* *Dutton* on the Resurrection, p. 96, 97.

SERM. convinced: Nay, in these Cases, Con-  
 IV. viction follows of Course. And further,  
 such Belief as this, comparatively speak-  
 ing, is but of little use; there being infi-  
 nite Numbers of Things both useful and  
 necessary to be believed, which are inca-  
 pable of this Sort of Proof. We have to  
 do with a great many Things which do  
 not fall under the Cognizance of our Sen-  
 ses, nor come within the Reach of strict  
 Demonstration. So that he that will act  
 upon no other Belief but this, will meet  
 with insurmountable Difficulties in the Af-  
 fairs of this Life, and will make little or  
 no Progress in the Concernments of ano-  
 ther. Upon which Account, though our  
 Saviour does not deny *Thomas* and the  
 rest of the Apostles to be blessed, yet,  
 with Regard to Faith, he pronounces  
 Those to be more blessed and happy, *who*  
*have not seen, and yet have believed.* And  
 this,

*Idly.* Is the other sort of Faith, which  
 I proposed to consider; Faith grounded  
 upon credible Testimony.



THIS is, properly speaking, Faith; the SERM.  
Object of which, must be something at a IV.  
Distance, and invifible. This Faith is of  
ftanding and lafting Ufe, whereby Peo-  
ple in after Ages must be faved, and give  
Glory to God.

*BLESSED are they who have not feen,  
and yet have believed.* These are the true  
Believers. And this is true Faith; to be-  
lieve that which we do not fee, but which  
we are perfwaded of the Truth of by o-  
ther Arguments.

THE Virtue and Praise of this Faith  
confists in this, That it leaves Room for  
a diligent Enquiry into the Matter of our  
Belief; that it is an Argument of Ingenuity  
and Love of Truth; and shows that we  
have juft Thoughts of the Goodness and  
Power of God, when, upon probable Te-  
ftimony, we yield our Affent to that which  
tends to the Confirmation of fuch a Scheme  
of Religion, as is moft worthy of God.  
The fame Emphasis is laid upon this fort  
of Faith, and the like Preference given to  
it, by St. *Peter*, in his first Epistle, *ch.* 1.  
8, 9. where the Apostle having magnify'd  
the inexpressible Mercy of God, in afford-  
ing

SERM.

IV.

ing us Christians so sure a Prospect of the never fading and eternal Happiness of Heaven, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Head; gives our Belief of this great Article its just Praise and Commendation, because upon reasonable and sufficient Evidence we embrace a Messiah we never personally knew, and believe the Doctrine and Promises of a Saviour we never actually saw; *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory; receiving the End of your Faith, even the Salvation of your Souls.*

THIS is the Case of all who, since the Apostles Times, believe the Resurrection of Christ: And herein the Value and Virtue of their Faith consists, not in believing what they have seen with their Eyes, and their Hands have handled, *i. e.* not in believing that which they could not help believing, and such are all those Things which are evident to Sense: These we are forced to believe against our Wills: But it consists in this, That we duly weigh and consider Things, that to this End we di-

vest our selves of all Prejudice and Partiality, and seek the Truth in the Love thereof, and show that we do so by entertaining every Proposition with such Assurance, as the Proofs it is built upon will warrant; and yielding to such Arguments as are of the greatest Strength, and which we have nothing considerable to object against, though the obstinate and tenacious, who are resolved to believe nothing but what they see and feel, would find Fault with them, that they might have some Pretence for withholding their Assent, and continuing in Unbelief, *but they will not*

To apply this to the Case before us: The joint Testimony of the Apostles was, in it self, a very good Proof of our Saviour's Resurrection; and yet it may easily be called in Question by those who are contentious; because 'tis no impossible Thing, but often happens, that Men should lie, and bear false Testimony, either through Malice and Wickedness, or Ignorance and Mistake. *but they will not*

BUT if we duly weigh all the Circumstances of the present Case, no reasonable and ingenuous Person can well reject or  
op-



SERM.

IV.



oppose this Testimony of the Apostles. For 'tis highly improbable, not that one, but that ten Men, who had hitherto been in great Esteem with all that knew them for their Probity and Integrity, should all on a suddain be so chang'd as to conspire to make a Lie, and bear false Witness in Honour of him who had deceived them, while he gave them an absolute Promise of his Resurrection, and never made it good, and fed them with vain Hopes of that which never came to pass; especially when they reaped no Manner of Advantage by this, and got neither Credit nor Profit, but exposed themselves to Scorn and Contempt, Hatred and Persecution.

NOR is it at all credible, that not only one, but ten Men, well and in their Senses, of sound Mind and Body, should suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to think they really saw and felt what in Truth they did not, but was only a Fantom of their own Imagination. And therefore *Thomas* acted a very unreasonable Part, and transgressed the Rules of Candor and Charity, when he refused to be-

lieve

lieve our Saviour's Resurrection upon the SERM. 2  
joint Testimony of these ten Disciples. IV.

FOR the whole World, all Mankind, have the same Right and Reason to reject the Testimony of all the Apostles; and of *Thomas* himself; and to say with him, *Except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, I will not believe.* And at this Rate, and by the same Rule, our Saviour must have appeared to every one then living, who required this Proof; and not only so, but to every one in after-Ages, who should insist upon the same Evidence for their Belief of his Resurrection. And then, as the Apostle says upon another Occasion, *must be often have suffered since the Foundation of the World;* and I may add, must often have risen too from the Dead, and showed himself alive again by such infallible Proofs as he gave to the Apostles, *Hebrews 9. 26.* But the Absurdity and Unreasonable of this is very apparent in it self, and will quickly be more so, if we do but apply it to other Instances where it will equally hold.

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IV.

FOR we may as well deny our Assent to Any Testimony, as to this of the Apostles; there being none, all Circumstances considered, which deserves more Credit than this. The Consequence of which would be, that we must believe nothing but what we have seen with our Eyes, and heard with our Ears, and been present at the transacting. This tends directly to the Destruction of all historical Faith, renders all the Monuments of Antiquity useless and insignificant, and reduces us at last to universal Scepticism and Infidelity. I say, universal Scepticism; since This Proceeding affects the civil as well as the religious Life.

FOR if credible Testimony be not a sufficient Ground of Assent, or Motive to Belief, there will quickly be an End of all the Affairs and Business of Life; in most of which we act upon the Accounts and Information we receive from others, and have no sensible Proof or mathematical Demonstration of the Truth of the Principles upon which we proceed. There are but few Things, especially in the practical Part of Life, capable of this sort of Evidence.

And



*The Blessedness of Believers.* III

And he that will neither eat, nor drink, SERM.  
nor sleep, neither travel, nor traffick, IV.  
buy, nor sell, nor take Physick, nor, in  
a word, transact any Business relating  
to the Body, or this Life, 'till he has ri-  
gid Demonstration that these Things will  
not only obtain the several Effects we ex-  
pect from them, but that they will not ob-  
tain the contrary Effects, and prove rui-  
nous and destructive; must sit still without  
doing any Thing at all.

IN all these Cases Men go upon high  
Probability, or at most upon moral Cer-  
tainty; and why this should not be suffici-  
ent in the Case before us, no good Reason  
can be assign'd.

THE Truth is, the State we are at pre-  
sent in, not being that of Vision, we must  
in many Things content ourselves with this  
sort of Evidence. And this will do in re-  
ligious as well as civil Matters. All the  
great Ends of Morality and Religion are  
well enough secured without philosophical  
Proofs of the Resurrection of the Body,  
and the Soul's Immortality; since 'tis evi-  
dent that he who made us at first begin to  
subsist here, sensible intelligent Beings,  
and

SERM. and for several Years continued us in such  
 IV. a State, can and will restore us to the like  
 State of Sensibility in another World, and  
 make us there capable to receive the Re-  
 tribution he has design'd for Men, accord-  
 ing to their Doings in this Life.

AND as this is sufficient Evidence in the  
 present Case, so the Faith which is built  
 upon it, is in it self more excellent than  
 that of sensible or mathematical Demon-  
 stration. The Faith of that Man who does  
 not see, and yet believes, is preferable to  
 his who sees, and is forced to believe by  
 many infallible Proofs; because the Faith  
 that is built upon credible Testimony, or  
 moral Certainty, is acquired by Labour  
 and Industry, by taking a near and exact  
 View of the Thing proposed to our Be-  
 lief, and weighing the Reasons and Ar-  
 guments on both Sides, and considering  
 which are more or less likely to be true;  
 and at last embracing that Side, on which  
 the weightiest Evidence lies.

THE Praise and Commendation of Wis-  
 dom consists not in knowing what we can't  
 but know, things that occur to our Sen-  
 ses, and force themselves upon us; but in  
 search-

searching out Truth by the Sagacity of SERM.  
our Judgment, and bringing it to Light; IV.  
or, as a wise and discerning Judge, in  
hearing the Arguments on both sides, and  
weighing them in the Balance of sound  
Reason, so as at last to pronounce a right  
Sentence.

AND in this, the Virtue of that Faith,  
for which the Heroes of the old Testa-  
ment were so eminent, consisted. They  
wanted an express Promise of eternal Life;  
And yet by the diligent Use and Exercise  
of their Reason and Understanding, they  
form'd this most just Notion of the Good-  
ness and Mercy of God, that since Piety  
and Virtue met with no Reward in this  
Life, they would not miss of it in a-  
nother: and since God by his infinite  
Power created this Universe, they con-  
cluded that it was by no Means a Thing  
impossible for him to raise the Dead. How  
truly may the Words in the Text be ap-  
ply'd to them; *Blessed are they who have*  
*not seen and yet have believed!* since with-  
out the Help of any Divine Promise or  
Revelation, by their own Observation and  
Reasoning they arriv'd at this Pitch of



SERM. Faith. Under the Gospel Revelation, we  
 IV. have a most sure Word of Promise, which  
 Christ seal'd with his own Blood; so that  
 we are at much less Pains than they, to  
 arrive at the Belief of our future Inheri-  
 tance.

BUT though their Faith was in this  
 respect better and more noble than ours,  
 yet we are not less blessed than they, but  
 more so; because God has afforded us o-  
 ther Means of Belief, and has by a new  
 Revelation supply'd us with more abun-  
 dant Light and Knowledge, than was  
 granted to the Men of those Times. And  
 yet even This is not such as will bear down  
 all Opposition.

THE Evidence which we have for the  
 Truth of our Religion is not irresistible,  
 like that of Sense, or mathematical De-  
 monstration: Nor is it reasonable to ex-  
 pect such Evidence. 'Tis inconsistent with  
 the Nature of Faith, and would destroy all  
 the Virtue both of our Belief and our Pra-  
 ctice. For, as I have already observed, if  
 the Evidence be irresistible, the Assent  
 must necessarily follow; in which Case the  
 Mind is purely passive, and is only acted

upon; and there is no more Virtue in believing, than in seeing or hearing. But in moral Evidence, and in Matters of Fact, the Truth of which depends upon credible Testimony; the Mind has Room to exert its Faculties, to divest itself of all Prejudice and Prepossession, calmly to consider the Merits of the Cause, and then to close in with that side on which lies the greatest Appearance of Truth, and firmly adhere to it in its future Conduct. There is real Virtue in such a rational Belief as this, and it cannot fail of recommending us to God.

AND as there is Virtue in such Belief as this, so likewise is there in the Practice which is grounded upon this Belief. He that from the natural Notions which he has of the Goodness, and Justice, and Veracity, and Holiness of God; and more especially from those Discoveries which God has made of himself by Revelation, and from the Proofs he has given us of the Truth of that Revelation, which are as many and as great as the Nature of the Thing will admit of; I say, The Man that upon these Principles resolves upon a religious

SERM. Conduct, and actually abstains from Vice  
 IV. and Wickedness, and lives in the Practice  
 of universal Righteousness and Holiness; is truly a religious Person; his Virtues are real and great, and do justly deserve Praise and Reward. He has Evidence enough to justify the Part he has chosen to act; and being fully perswaded in his own Mind, he is resolved to persevere in the Course he has begun.

BUT supposing the Truths of Religion capable of such Proofs as some insist on, which indeed they are not; and that we had sensible Demonstration, or mathematical Certainty, for every Article of our Creed; that we saw Heaven open, and Jesus sitting at the right Hand of God; that Hell it self was naked before us, and Destruction had no Covering; that we were as sure of the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, as we are of the Pains and Pleasures of this present Life; What Virtue would there be in any of our religious Performances? Would there be any Mortification, or Self-denial, in restraining our vicious Appetites, or abridging our selves in our lawful and innocent



## *The Blessedness of Believers.* 117

noent Enjoyments? Would there be any **SERM.**  
Humility, Patience, and Contentment, in **IV.**  
bearing Poverty, Pain, and Disappoint-  
ments? Would it be any Argument of our  
Trust in God, that we declined all indirect  
Methods of relieving our selves? Or could  
it be called an Acknowledgment of his  
Truth and Veracity, that we believed his  
Promises, and feared his Threats? Or  
would our Obedience to his Laws, be any  
Proof of our owning his Authority over  
us?

'Tis evident that, upon the present Sup-  
position, all these Things might proceed  
from other Principles; and that there  
would be but little Virtue in these Practi-  
ces, and less Praise due to them. For if  
there was such irresistible Evidence for the  
great Truths of Religion, if they were  
thus brought home to our Senses, and set  
before our Eyes in such an open and a gla-  
ring Light; where is the Person that has  
the Boldness, or rather Fool-hardiness  
to venture upon any wicked Action, which  
he was as sure to suffer so severely for, as  
ever he committed it? Or, who would  
turn his Back upon the Practice of any

SERM. Virtue, though in the most difficult Instance; for which he was as sure of such an ample Reward, as if he had it actually in his Hand? At this rate Virtue would scarce be Virtue, when it was not voluntary, but in a manner forced upon us: And Vice would have such a hideous and frightful Prospect, as would be an effectual Bar against all Approaches towards it.

IV.

BUT as Matters are now ordered, and God has given such Proof of the Truth of those Things which he has proposed to our Belief, as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy every fair and candid Enquirer, and to be a just Ground for the Practice of Religion and Virtue, though it will neither convince nor convert the obstinate and perverse, and those that are wedded to their Lusts, and love the Wages of Unrighteousness: He has left Men room for the Exercise of their Virtue, and the Tryal of their Faith; that they who will hearken to Reason and Argument, and be led thereby to the Obedience of Faith, to believe and obey the Gospel, might be Partakers of the Promises which are there made over to them; and they who will not believe and obey

obey it, might be left without Excuse, SERM.  
and inherit the due Reward of their IV.  
Deeds.

IN a word, Men ought not to see with that Evidence as to be constrain'd to believe; and yet they ought to have so much Light, as to be left without Excuse for not believing.

FROM what has been said, we may learn,

I. THE Folly and Absurdity of a blind implicit Faith, not only without, but contrary to all rational, and even sensible Evidence. For That Faith only is true and genuine, which is well grounded, and built upon sufficient Evidence. To believe without any Reason of our Belief, is not Faith but Folly; 'tis Credulity and Weakness. And to believe that which we evidently see and understand to be false, or absurd and impossible; is not Faith, but Obstinacy and Madness.

IF we were to believe any Thing contrary to Reason, and in Defiance of our Senses, as the Church of *Rome* requires her Members to do; our Saviour could not



SERM. have appeal'd to the Senses of his Disci-  
 IV. ples for the Truth of his Resurrection: For if  
 our Senses are not to be trusted, this would  
 have been no Proof of it; Nor could he  
 have reprov'd *Thomas* for not receiving  
 the Testimony of those who saw him af-  
 ter he was risen, since this would have  
 been no Proof that their Testimony was  
 true; Nor could he have pronounced those  
 blessed, who believed upon credible Testi-  
 mony, since they might as well have be-  
 lieved implicitly upon no Testimony at all.  
 It follows therefore, that that Faith is best  
 which is wrought in us by the best Rea-  
 sons, and is the result of the most mature  
 Enquiry. Where we have not the Evi-  
 dence of Sense, or strict Demonstration,  
 we may have Evidence of another Kind,  
 and in a Degree sufficient to satisfy any  
 reasonable Person. *Thomas*, who had  
 not at first the same sensible Demonstration  
 of the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrecti-  
 on, which the other Disciples had; yet  
 had their joint Testimony, which he could  
 not reasonably except against, and there-  
 fore ought not to have been faithless, but  
 believing. We who have not either of  
 these

these Proofs at first Hand, and in their fullest Strength, which is impossible now; have them in the best Manner, which at this Time is possible, *i. e.* we have the History of them convey'd to us with as much Certainty as we have any other Facts of such Antiquity; so that we cannot refuse our Assent to them, without disbelieving every Thing that passed in former Times. And therefore,

2. HENCE we may discern wherein the Guilt and Crime of Infidelity consists; and that is, not in bare Unbelief. Simply to disbelieve a Thing, may be no Fault, because there may be no Reason to believe it; and barely to believe a Thing, is no Virtue, because there may be sufficient Evidence for the Truth of it, and then we cannot but believe it. Belief is always and necessarily in proportion to the apparent Evidence; and Disbelief as necessarily follows the want of it.

AND therefore as the Virtue of Faith consists in the Minds attending to the Things proposed to our Belief, in a diligent Search after Truth, and calmly weighing the Arguments and Proofs on both Sides,

SERM. Sides, in the Ballance of impartial Reason,  
 IV. and then freely yielding our Assent, and  
 owning our Conviction: So the Fault of  
 Infidelity lies in the contrary to this, in  
 refusing our Attention to the Things pro-  
 posed to our Belief, in not searching and  
 enquiring into the Truth of them, nor  
 hearkening to those Arguments which are  
 brought for their Proof; in standing out a-  
 gainst sufficient Evidence, so as not to be  
 convinced by that with which others are  
 satisfied, and with which we too our selves  
 are satisfied in other Cases. In this the  
 Crime and Guilt of Infidelity consists, in  
 shutting our Eyes against the Light; in its  
 being voluntary and wilful.

3. FROM our Saviour's Condescension  
 in complying with the Weakness of the  
 Apostle, who would not believe his Re-  
 surrection upon the Testimony of the o-  
 ther Apostles, but insisted upon seeing him  
 himself; and, lest his Eyes might deceive  
 him, and what he saw might be a Phan-  
 tom or Spectre, and not a real Man, would  
 feel and handle him too: I say, from this  
 great Instance of Condescension and Com-  
 pliance in our blessed Saviour, we should



learn of him to be meek and lowly in SERM. 22  
Heart, to *bear the Infirmities of the* IV.  
*Weak, and not to please our selves, but e-*  
*very one of us to please his Neighbour*  
*for his Good to Edification,* Rom. 15.  
1, 2.

WHERE Persons are honest and sincere,  
such as the Apostle no doubt was, we  
should bear with their Weaknesses and Im-  
perfections ; and though they be slow of  
Belief, and of mean Capacities, we should  
not slight and neglect them, but let down  
our selves to their Pitch, and with Pati-  
ence and Meekness instruct them in the  
Truth ; allow them the Liberty of asking  
us what Questions they please, of propo-  
sing their Doubts, and Difficulties, and  
Scruples ; and give them the plainest and  
easiest Solution. In this Sense, and for  
these Ends, must we all of us be subject one  
to another, and be cloathed with Humi-  
lity.

BUT where Men maliciously resist the  
Truth, and stand out against the clearest  
Evidence, and manifestly betray an evil  
Heart of Unbelief ; there indeed we are  
not obliged to this Condescension, nor to  
la-

SERM.

IV.

labour the Conviction of those who will not be convinced.

THIS is throwing Pearls before Swine, losing our Time and Pains, and enhancing the Guilt and Condemnation of those to whom these Applications are made.

THIS was the Method which our Saviour and his Apostles observed in converting Men to the Christian Faith. Where they found People of ingenuous Tempers and Dispositions, tractable and teachable; they accommodated themselves to them, and spared no Time or Pains to instruct and convince them. But where they discerned an Aversion to Light and Knowledge, strong and wilful Prejudices against the Truth; they left Men to themselves, and would not bestow much Labour upon them in vain.

THUS our Saviour held very long and familiar Discourses with *Nicodemus*, the Woman of *Samaria*, and *Martba*, whose Brother *Lazarus* he raised from the Dead; and instructed them very plainly and particularly in many material Points concerning himself and his Doctrine. But when he had to do with the stubborn and obstinate,

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nate, though he said enough to leave SERM. them without Excuse, and many Times had much Discourse with them; yet this, IV for the most Part, was to expostulate with, and upbraid them for their unreasonable Unbelief, and mad Behaviour towards him: For he was not so plain and particular in his Instructions to such People as these, but generally spoke to them in Parables, which he afterwards explained when he was alone with his Disciples. And so for his Miracles, he chose to work them in the greatest Plenty, where he knew they would meet with the best Reception; and 'tis frequently recorded as a Mark of Infamy upon some Places, that he *could not do many mighty Works there, because of their Unbelief,* Matt. 13. 58.

Thus also our Saviour commanded the Apostles to behave themselves in their Ministry. *Into whatsoever City ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the Streets of the same, and say; even the very Dust of your City, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you; Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,* Luke 10. 10, 11.

AND



SERM.

IV.

AND their Practice was agreeable to this. Thus when *Paul* preached at *Antioch*; and the Jews seeing the Multitudes, were filled with Envy, and spake against what he said, contradicting and blaspheming; *Paul* and *Barnabas* waxed bold, and said, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge your selves unworthy of everlasting Life, lo, we turn unto the Gentiles, Acts 13. 45, 46.* Hence it follows,

4. THAT God is not obliged to give Men the highest Proof, and the utmost Degree of Evidence that can be, of the Truth of Christianity. It is abundantly sufficient, and a full Vindication of his Justice and Goodness, if he gives those, to whom he makes known the Gospel, such Evidence of the Truth of it, as is enough to satisfy every honest and sincere Mind; if he gives Men such Proofs as they submit to in all other Cases, and think strong enough to justify their Proceedings in Affairs of the nearest and dearest Concern to them in this Life.

THE greatest and highest Evidence is **SERM.**  
that of Sense. This was what the Apo- **IV.**  
stles had when our Saviour first appeared  
to them, and *Thomas* was not with them.  
So that they had infallible Proof of the  
Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection. Our  
Saviour condescended to give *Thomas* also  
this Proof. I say, he condescended to do  
it; for he was not obliged to it; since  
*Thomas* ought to have believed his Resur-  
rection upon the Testimony of the other  
Apostles, and is reprov'd for not so belie-  
ving it. But as he was an Apostle, who  
was to be a Witness of this Truth; he  
thought fit to give him the same Evidence  
of it with the rest of his Brethren.

MANY others also had the same Evi-  
dence of this Truth; and Their Testimony  
likewise laid an Obligation upon others to  
believe their Report. This is expressly de-  
termin'd by our Saviour, *Mark 16. 14.*  
*Afterward he appear'd unto the Eleven,*  
*as they sat at Meat, and upbraided them*  
*with their Unbelief, and Hardness of*  
*Heart, because they believed not them*  
*which had seen him after he was risen.*  
But if they were not obliged to believe  
with-

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SERM. without the highest Evidence, they were  
 IV. reprov'd without Reason.

It follows therefore, that God is not always obliged to give Men the highest Evidence of the Truth of Christianity. This may be necessary to lay the Foundation, and for the first Establishment of it, and God may think fit in this Case to do it: But it would be unreasonable to expect it afterwards. Nay, it would be absurd, and impracticable, and by no means suitable to the Condition and Circumstances of After-ages, and to the End and Design of a standing Revelation.

For, to keep to the Instance before us; if nothing that comes short of the Evidence of Sense, could oblige Men to believe our Saviour's Resurrection; if none were bound to believe that he was risen from the Dead, but those who saw him alive after his Passion; then must he have appeared to all the Men of those Times, to have convinced them of this Truth. And even this would not have been sufficient. For this would have been no Proof, but to those who personally knew our Saviour. They who had never seen our Saviour, or  
 were



were not acquainted with him, could not SERM.  
be convinced this Way. So that even in IV.  
those Times, some must believe upon the  
Credit and Testimony of others; or Infir-  
delity could be no Sin.

AND if this was necessary in those ear-  
ly Times, much more must it be so in af-  
ter Ages, when the Apostles were no long-  
er present. It was impossible then, for Men  
to have even the Report of our Saviour's  
Resurrection immediately from those who  
were Eye-witnesses of it; so that they  
must believe it upon the Report and Testi-  
mony of the Apostles conveyed to them  
in such a Manner, and with so much Evi-  
dence, as they had no Reason to doubt or  
question, but that it was faithfully con-  
veyed and transmitted to them. This  
brings it down to our own Case: For into  
this, *our* Belief of this great Article, *who*  
live at this Distance from the Age of  
Christ, must finally be resolv'd. We have  
no other than a moral Certainty, an histo-  
rical Faith or Assurance of it: And 'tis, in  
the Nature of the Thing, impossible for us  
to have any other.

SERM.

IV!

It would be to no Purpose for our Saviour to show himself to us, as he did to the Apostles; because we have neither seen him, nor known him. And for the same Course of Miracles to be wrought over every Age, which were at first wrought for the Confirmation of Christianity; is so wild and absurd a Demand, that it sufficiently answers it self.

It remains therefore, that we rest content with the same Kind and Degree of Evidence, which satisfies us in Cases of the same Nature; otherwise we are left without Excuse. And I may venture to affirm, that Men every Day hazard their Lives and Estates upon much weaker Foundations, and less Degrees of Certainty, than those upon which the Truth of Christianity is grounded.

HENCE it follows, 5thly, That Infal-  
 lible Certainty is not essential to true  
 Faith; or, in other Words, that that Faith  
 or Belief of Christianity may be suffi-  
 cient to please God, and attain Salvation;  
 which does not exclude all Weakness and  
 Imperfection, nor is grounded upon the  
 utter Impossibility of the Falseness of  
 those

those Things which we believe to be true. SERM.  
IV.

SUCH a Faith as this, the Church of Rome, which pretends to Infallibility, contends for, and exacts from all her Members. But though Men are unreasonable, God requires nothing but Reason. He considers our Frame and Make, and does not expect any Thing from us which is out of the Reach of those Faculties which he has given us. Infallibility is the incommunicable Prerogative of the Divine Nature, and by no Means agreeable to a Human Understanding: Nor is it at all necessary in the present Case, or requisite to answer the Ends and Purposes of Faith. If our Faith affords us so much Light, as to make us leave the Works of Darkness; if we have such a Belief of those important Truths which Christianity sets before us, as to be duly affected by them; if we have such an Assurance of the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, as will excite our utmost Endeavours to obtain the one, and avoid the other; all the real Ends and Purposes of Faith are answered, and we need not doubt but that



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SERM. 'tis genuine and true, such as is acceptable to God, and available to Salvation.

BUT as to absolute Certainty, and infallible Assurance, such as is above Sense or Science; as 'tis unnecessary, and would indeed destroy the Virtue of our Obedience, so 'tis impossible to be had, whatever rash Pretences Men may make to it.

*6<sup>thly</sup>, and Lastly,* FROM what has been said, we may learn to correct a very great and general Mistake, which we are too apt to run into, of thinking the Condition of those who liv'd in the Times of our Saviour and his Apostles so much happier than ours, and the Advantages which they enjoy'd so much above any which we now have for the Confirmation of our Faith, and consequently for the promoting in us the Practice of the Christian Life.

MANY cannot help thinking, that if it had been their Lot to have conversed personally with Christ and his Apostles, and to have been Eye and Ear Witnesses of their Doctrine and Miracles, they should

by such an Advantage have believed SERM.  
without the least Doubt, and obeyed IV.  
without any Reserve, and been there-  
by not only secured from all possibility of  
miscarrying, but entituled to a greater  
Reward.

BUT besides that we cannot tell whe-  
ther we should have made a right use of  
this Advantage, and not have been of  
the Number of those, and many such  
there were in those Times, who, not-  
withstanding all this Evidence, rejected  
the Gospel: I say, besides this, 'tis plain  
from the Text and what has been said  
upon it, that with regard to our Faith,  
we who have not seen, and yet believe,  
are more blessed than they who belie-  
ved because they had seen. Our Faith is  
in it self really and truly greater, and  
more deserving than the Faith of the Men  
of those Times; because it is built upon  
less, though sufficient Evidence. So that  
in this Respect, we do not come behind,  
but even surpass the Apostles themselves;  
though upon Account of their great  
Labours and Sufferings they are far  
beyond us, and we can by no Means

SERM. expect to equal them in our Reward.

IV.

To this I might add, that though there be some Advantages which those early Times would have furnished us with, and which we now want; there are others which we now enjoy, and could not have had then, and which are more than an Equivalent. The Primitive Christians had fuller Proofs of the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles and his Resurrection, than we have; but we have other Proofs of the Truth of Christianity as strong, which they had not.

WE have seen what was then only foretold, the Success of the Gospel upon the Apostles preaching it; and the wonderful Progress it has made in the World, notwithstanding all the Opposition it has met with: And this is a good Argument of its coming from God. Thus Gamaliel reasoned the Case with the Jews: *If this Council, or this Work be of Men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God, Acts 5. 38, 39.*



WE have the Completion of several SERM.  
other Prophecies, particularly of the De- IV.

struction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*. As our Saviour's Miracles and Resurrection, were Matters of Fact to them, and of Faith to us; so these Things were to them Matters of Faith only, and to us they are Matters of Fact, of Sight and Experience, and the strongest Confirmation of the Truth of those Things which we believe.

THE Advantages therefore of those Times were not so great above what we now enjoy, as we may at first imagine: But whatever they were, we are sure that in respect of our Faith, our Saviour has pronounced us blessed above them. Let us take Care to secure this Blessing to us, by divesting our selves of all Prejudices, especially those which arise from our Lusts and Vices; that we may discern the Truth, and have a firm Foundation for our Faith. And above all, let us add to our Faith Virtue; For though we are blessed for believing without seeing, yet we shall not be blessed for believing without doing.

SERM. ing. And though we believe these

IV. Things never so firmly, and know them  
never so well; we shall not be happy un-  
less we do them.



The



# The Government of our selves.



PROV. xvi. 32.

*He that is slow to Anger, is  
better than the Mighty ;  
and he that ruleth his Spi-  
rit, than he that taketh a  
City.*



HIS proverbial Speech con-SERM.  
tains a just Commendation V.

*of Power over our selves,  
and the Government of our  
Passions ; and gives the  
Preference to this Domestick Jurisdiction,  
this Home-Government, as more truly  
great*



SERM. great and excellent, than all foreign Rule,  
 V. and external Authority and Power. And  
 this Commendation is so much the more  
 remarkable, as it comes from one who  
 wanted none of this external Power and  
 Authority; and therefore cannot be sup-  
 pos'd to disparage it upon that Account.  
 He was one of the greatest and most pow-  
 erful Princes, and had all the Means of  
 raising himself and subduing his Enemies  
 in his own Hands; But as he made Wisdom  
 his first and chief Request to God, so he both  
 valu'd and possess'd it in a greater Degree  
 than other Men. This enabled Him to pass a  
 right Judgment upon Things, and esteem  
 them not according to their outward Ap-  
 pearance, or the Opinion the World had of  
 them, but according to their own native  
 Worth and intrinsick Value.

OF this we have an Instance in the  
 Text. For what is there in the common O-  
 pinion of the World, and to all outward  
 Appearance, more excellent and desirable  
 than great Power and Might, and, which  
 is the natural Consequence of these, Victo-  
 ry and Success over those who rise up a-  
 gainst us? Is not this esteem'd a great Hap-  
 piness?

piness? Does not this gain Man Credit and Reputation, and make them courted and admired? And yet there is another Sort of Power, which, though not so conspicuous, nor attended with so much Noise and Show, is more truly great than this, and renders those who have it more excellent. There is another Victory, which tho' of a more private Nature, secret and silent, is yet more difficult, and of greater Consequence than this. And what this is, the Words of the wise Man will tell us; *He that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

I SHALL in my following Discourse,

I. BRIEFLY explain what that is, which the wise Man here commends, And,

II. CONSIDER with what Truth and Justice he gives it so great a Commendation.

I. I SHALL briefly explain what that is, which the wise Man here commends, And

SERM.

V.



And that is, in general, the full Command and Government of our selves ; the entire Conquest not only of our Anger, but of all our Passions and Affections. For what is at first express'd by *being slow to Anger*, is afterwards more fully explained by *ruling our Spirit*. From whence 'tis evident that this Victory is not to be confin'd to the single Passion of Anger, but is to be extended to all others, to Love and Hatred, Desire, Joy, Hope and Fear, Envy, Sorrow, Despair, and the like. The Government of all these is included in ruling our Spirit ; nor shall we ever be able to rule our Spirit, without the Government and Command of all our Passions ; because any one of them is sufficient to disturb and disquiet our Spirits, and deprive us of the free Use and Exercise of our rational Faculties, and the full Possession and Enjoyment of our selves.

BESIDES which, 'tis observable that these Passions are scarce any of them, in Life and Practice, simple and alone, and wholly unmix'd with others : though usually in Discourse and Contemplation, *that* Passion carries the Name, which operates  
strong-



strongest, and appears most in the present **SERMON**  
State of the Mind. Many of the Passions **V.**  
are compounded and made up of others;  
and most of them are accompany'd with  
others. Thus there is scarce any of the  
Passions to be found, without Desire join'd  
to it; for each of them have their Unea-  
siness, and, where-ever there is Uneasiness,  
there is always Desire to have that Unea-  
siness remov'd, and our Happiness com-  
pleted. Thus even in Joy it self, That  
which keeps up the Action whereon the  
Enjoyment depends, is the desire to con-  
tinue it, and fear to lose it; and, when-ever  
a greater Uneasiness than That takes Place  
in the Mind, the Will presently is by that  
determined to some new Action, and the  
present Delight neglected.

BUT not to pursue these Speculations any  
further: What has been thus briefly hinted,  
is sufficient to show, that the Government of  
all our Passions is necessary towards obtain-  
ing this *Rule of our Spirits*, and Command  
of our selves; and this not only because  
one single Passion let loose in our Breasts is  
enough to destroy all Self-Government,  
but upon Account of the natural Connecti-  
on

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SERM. on there is between the Passions, which  
 V. makes it impossible to have the entire Government of any one, without our being at the same Time in a great Measure Masters of the rest.

WHEN therefore *Solomon* here speaks of one that is slow to Anger, and ruleth his Spirit ; he plainly means, one who has the entire Command of himself, and the Government of all his Passions, and has brought them under Subjection to the Reason of his Mind. One, whose Judgment is not blinded, nor his Will perverted by any Lust or Vice, so as to be impos'd upon by any Error, and either judge that to be good which is really evil, or choose Evil when he knows and sees what is Good. One, who keeps strictly to the Order of Nature, and lets that which is soveraign and superior in him have the sole Rule and Dominion over him, and makes his inferior Appetites and Passions obey the superior Conduct of Reason and Judgment ; and is never betray'd into any Action which is either wicked or indecent, contrary to his Character or his Duty. One who keeps such a strict Hand over all  
 his

his Passions and Affections, as never to **SERM.**  
suffer them to run out into any Excess, and **V.**  
either mistake or exceed their Object. One,  
who does not carry his Resentments of a-  
ny Injury beyond the Rules of Justice or  
Decorum ; who fixes Bounds to his De-  
sires, and does not permit them to wander  
without End or Measure : Who can com-  
mand his Fears, and keep them from mul-  
tiplying imaginary Dangers, or enhauncing  
real ones at the Expence of his Duty and  
Conscience: Who can bring his Hopes to  
the Standard of Reason, and not suffer his  
Fancy to extend them further than there  
is any Ground for Expectation.

IN a word, the Man that is meek and  
merciful, calm and gentle, dispassionate  
and unprejudic'd, inflexibly good and vir-  
tuous ; is the Person here intended by *Solo-*  
*mon.* *He that is thus slow to Anger, is*  
*better than the Mighty : And he that in*  
*all these Instances ruleth his Spirit, than*  
*he that taketh a City.*

WITH what Truth and Justice the Pre-  
ference is given to this Man, is the



SERM.

V.

II. AND principal Thing to be considered.

AND this will fully appear from these two following Particulars.

1. This private Rule over a Man's self, and the Government of our Passions, is really in it self more *truly great and excellent* than any Rule or Dominion over others.

2. It is attended with greater and more *beneficial Consequences*.

1. THIS private Rule over a Man's self, and the Government of our Passions, is really in it self more *truly great and excellent* than any Rule or Dominion over others.

(1.) As 'tis an Argument of greater Power.

The Power of a rational Being, does not consist in mere external Force and Strength; (in this we are exceeded by many Creatures, and even those which have no Life or Sense :) But in the Force and Strength of the Mind, and the Power which That has over our inferior Appetites and Passions. And therefore the Man that is addicted to any unruly Lust or

Pas-

Passion; that is transported, for Instance, SERM.  
V.  
by Anger, to Acts of Cruelty and Revenge; is not a Man of Power, but is really weak, and feeble, and impotent. He may have others under his Power, and at his Command, but he has no Power or Command over himself; nor is he at his own Disposal, but as much under the Tyranny of his Lusts, as those whom he persecutes and troubles. And where is the Difference between our being under the Power of other Men's Passions, or our own? Is not the one as great a Weakness, as the other? Is it not a greater Weakness to be our selves enslaved to that, by which we make Slaves of others?

THERE is therefore no Power comparable to that which we exercise over our selves; and no greater Proof of this Power, than Patience, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering.

AND we shall be further confirmed in this Notion, if we take our Pattern from God, who is the true Standard of Power and all Perfection.

HE is the most powerful Being, not only because he can do what he pleases every

SERM. ry where, but because he does all Things  
V. according to the Counſel of his own Will.

His Power is directed by unerring Wiſdom, and by the eternal Rules of Goodneſs, Juſtice, and Truth. He is therefore moſt powerful, becauſe he is moſt patient, and free from all thoſe Paſſions and Reſentments, whereby Men betray their Weakneſs and Want of Power. When he is daily provok'd by ſuch vile and deſpicable Creatures as we, he can withhold his Hand from deſtroying us. And this the Pſalmiſt makes uſe of, as an Argument of his great Power; *God is a righteous Judge, ſtrong and patient, and God is provoked every Day*, Pſal. 7. 11. And *Moses* places God's Power herein, in that Prayer which he made for the diſobedient People; *Num. 14. 17, 18. And now I beſeech thee, let the Power of my Lord be great, according as thou haſt ſpoken, ſaying, The Lord is Long-ſuffering, and of great Mercy, forgiving Iniquity and Tranſgreſſion.*

So that if we take our Meaſure of Power from the Divine Nature, we muſt place it, not in conquering others, but in ſubduing



duing our selves, and reducing all our SERM.  
Passions to the Obedience of Reason. V.

AND as this is the true Power of a rational Being, and is upon that Account preferable to all external Rule and Government, and in it self more excellent ; so,

(2.) 'Tis a greater Argument of true Wisdom and Discretion.

ALL Passion implies, not only Weakness and Impotency, but the greatest Folly and Indiscretion. And never any Man did that in a Passion, which he would justify afterwards, nay which he would not inwardly condemn, and, if he had any Ingenuity, openly confess to be wrong, and ask Pardon for it.

FOR what we do in a Passion, is always done without Reason, and for the most part against it. Reason, at such Times, is never heard or hearkened to, never consulted or advised with ; and then 'tis no Wonder that the Action is foolish, and such as we are ashamed of. And therefore a wise Man will be afraid to expose himself to any Passion or Provocation ; because, before he is thus transported, he has

SERM. himself in his own Hands, and enjoys the  
 V. free use of his Reason ; but after he is provoked, he is not sure of himself, nor can he tell how much of himself will remain with himself, and how far he shall be at his own Disposal. For Passion is a short Fit of Madness; and if we suffer our selves to be overtaken with it, there is nothing so mad, foolish, and extravagant, but we may be guilty of, while we continue in that State.

AND can we think That Man wise and discreet, who rules and governs others, but has no Manner of Command over himself: Who has subdued his Enemies, and extended his Conquests far and wide, but has not conquered any one Lust or Passion, nor enlarged the Freedom of his own Mind, but has left himself in a more wretched and miserable Condition at home, than his Enemies are abroad ?

'Tis certain that every Man's own self is more nearly related, and of greater Concern to him, than all the World besides. And Wisdom as well as Charity ought to begin at home, though it should not end there. *If thou be wise (says Solomon)*

mon) thou shalt be wise for thy self, Prov. SERM.  
9. 12. V.

'Tis impossible for Men not to love themselves ; and Self-love in a true Sense, is an Argument of great Wisdom ; there can however be no true Wisdom without it.

No Man will ever think Him wise, who is extremely busy and solicitous about other Peoples Affairs, while he neglects and overlooks his own ; who is continually troubling himself about what passes abroad, and never looks at home, but suffers all there to run to Ruin : who affects to have Authority and Dominion over others, but apprehends no Necessity of ruling his own Spirit, and keeping his Passions under due Subjection and Restraint. And yet this is certainly the truest Wisdom, in the Account of God as well as Men. *The Discretion of a Man deferreth his Anger, and it is his Glory to pass over a Transgression.*

Prov. 19. 11. and 14. 29. *He that is slow to Anger, is of great Understanding ; but he that is hasty of Spirit, exalteth Folly.* And again ; *ch. 17. 27.* since many and hasty Words are generally the Effect of Passion, he tells us, *That he that hath Knowledge,*



SERM. *spareth his Words ; and a Man of Under-  
 V. standing is of an excellent Spirit, or (as  
 the Word is fitly render'd in the Margin)  
 of a cool Spirit.*

(3.) THIS private Rule over our own Spirits, and Government of our Passions, is an Argument of more Courage, and true Greatness of Mind ; than the largest Conquests over others, and the most celebrated Atchivements in War.

THE conquering and subduing others, is sometimes nothing else but the effect of so much brutish Force and superior Strength, as leaves no room at all for Courage, but is rather an Instance of Cowardice. At other Times, 'tis performed by inconsiderate Heat and fierce Rage, and shews the Greatness of our Passion rather than our Courage. For true Courage is always accompany'd with Consideration, and goes upon fixed and steady Principles. And therefore the Man that upon mature Deliberation with himself, and a thorough Conviction of the great Beauty and Excellency of Virtue, and the Deformity and Baseness of Sin and Wickedness; the great Reasonableness of Justice and Mer-  
 cy,

cy, Temperance and Chastity, and the great **SERM.**

Unreasonableness of Cruelty and Oppressi- **V.**

on, Pride, Covetousness, and Excess, and considering the Obligations he is under to practise these Virtues, and abstain from the contrary Vices: I say, The Man that upon such Considerations and Principles as these, resolves to wage War with himself, and overcome all those Passions which rise up in Opposition to his religious Designs, and would divert him from a steady Course of Virtue, and draw him into any sinful or foolish Action; and does actually keep his Ground, and maintain his Integrity, his Meekness, and Temper, and Moderation, amidst all the Allurements to Sin, and Provocations to Anger and Passion; shows more true Courage and Greatness of Mind, than he that conquers the greatest and most powerful Nations. The one is the Effect of settled Principles, and mature Deliberation; the other frequently of sudden Heat, and hasty Passion, Ambition and Vain-glory, Anger, Cruelty, and Revenge. He that ruleth his Spirit, shows the more Courage of the two; for he ventures to oppose That by which the other

SERM. V. overcomes; and he subdues even the Conquerors themselves.

BUT suppose our Victory over others at the best, and that it is not the Product of any irregular Passion, nor prosecuted out of any wrong End or selfish Design, but for our own necessary Security and just Defence; yet still it is not equal to that Victory which we gain over our own Spirit and Passions; because,

(4.) THIS private Rule and Government over our selves, is more truly our own Work and Doing, and may more properly be ascribed to our selves, than any Power or Dominion which we acquire over others.

VICTORY and Success in War, the taking of Cities, and subduing Kingdoms, depend upon several Things; and there are many that must share the Glory of them. The General may lay the Design, and be the Leader in the Attacque; but the Courage and Number of the Soldiers are necessary to carry it on, and compleat it; and every one of these, hath a just Claim in the Honour and Success of the Day. To this we may add the Situation of the Place,



Place, the critical Juncture of Time, the SERM.  
Seasonableness of Wind and Weather, and V.  
many other Things, which, though out  
of our Power, contribute so much to the  
gaining of Victory, that it often turns en-  
tirely upon them. The more Things there  
are of this kind that help us to Success, the  
less is there of it to be ascribed to us, and  
of which we can justly claim the Honour  
our selves. Not that this detracts any  
Thing from those who succeed in these pub-  
lick Enterprises; Their Courage and Con-  
duct is still the same; and when they do  
what lies in their Power, they are to have  
the Honour even of that which was out of  
their Power, as Providence has been plea-  
sed to pitch upon them for the Instruments  
of bringing about its Designs.

BUT in this private War which we wage  
with our own Lusts and Passions, in ru-  
ling our Spirits, and overcoming our  
selves; the Victory is more truly and pro-  
perly our own, and there are none to share  
with us in it.

IT is true indeed, the Grace of God is  
even to be acknowledged in our spiritual  
Affairs, as well as his daily Providence in

our

SERM. our temporal Concerns; and without his

V.

Assistance we should be able to do as little in the one as the other. But then of all those Things which we do, which we possess and have, our Virtues are most of our own Acquisition. These are more peculiarly our own Act and Deed, to which we contribute most our selves, and which we could never have without using our own Strength and Endeavours. Many other Things may befall us without our seeking, or being assisting to them; but these must be diligently sought, and earnestly labour'd after, or we shall never be Masters of them. He that rules his Spirit, and overcomes himself; he that subdues his Anger and Passion, and quells every Tumult and Commotion that is raised in his own Breast, and is meek and humble, gentle and easy to be entreated, pure and holy; does this in a great Measure, *proprio Marte*, by his own Force and Strength. Next to the Grace of God, this Victory is to be ascribed to himself, and is more truly and properly his own Work and Doing; and there are none to share the Glory of it with him.

OTHER

OTHER Atchievements are not always SERM.  
Signs of valuable Endowments and Quali- V.  
fications; for *the Race is not always to*

*the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong:*

But a Man's Virtues shew what he is.

The Government of our Passions, and the

Rule of our Spirits, bear an impartial Te-

stimony to our Worth; These are infallible

Tokens of our native Excellency, and in-

trinsick Merit. So that upon this Account

also, *He that is slow to Anger, is better*

*than the Mighty; and he that ruleth him-*

*self, than he that taketh a City.*

AND thus it appears wherein this pri-

ivate Rule over a Man's self, and the Go-

vernment of his Passions, is really in it

self more truly great and excellent than a-

ny external Rule and Dominion, any Vic-

tory or Conquest over others. For we

see 'tis an Argument of greater Power; it

shows more true Wisdom and Discretion;

'tis a Proof of more Courage and Great-

ness of Mind, and is more properly our

own Work, and a surer Token of inward

Worth and Merit. Upon these Accounts,

this private Rule and Government over

our selves and our own Passions, is, in it

self,



SERM. self, more truly great and excellent than  
 V. any external Dominion and Power which  
 we acquire over others. And this was the  
 first Consideration I offered, to justify the  
 Preference which the wise Man gives it,  
 and to show with what Truth and Justice he  
 does here pronounce the *Man that is slow  
 to Anger, better than the Mighty; and  
 he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that  
 taketh a City.*

I PROCEED now to the

2. CONSIDERATION I offered for the  
 further clearing this Point: That this pri-  
 vate Rule over a Man's self and his own  
 Spirit, is attended with greater and more  
*beneficial Consequences*, than any exter-  
 nal Rule and Power; than the conquer-  
 ing whole Nations, and subduing King-  
 doms.

(1.) The ruling our own Spirits, and  
 the right Government of our Passions,  
 would in a great Measure destroy the Ne-  
 cessity of external Conquest and Domi-  
 nion; and better secure all the Ends of  
 Civil Government, than the Force of  
 Arms, and the Power of the Sword.

THOUGH

*The Government of our selves.* 157

THOUGH War be in it self never so just SERM.  
and necessary for our own Security and V.  
Defence; yet it must be own'd to be a ne-  
cessary Evil. And though Victory and  
Success against the unjust Attempts of our  
Enemies, be confessedly great Blessings;  
yet it were certainly more desirable not to  
want them; As it is a better State to live  
without Enemies, than to be at the Trou-  
ble of subduing them.

INDEED there is scarce any Considera-  
tion so melancholy, and which administers  
such Grief to the Mind of every good  
Man, as the absolute Necessity there is of  
Wars and publick Desolations, as well  
as the inflicting Death and Imprisonment  
and other Punishments upon private Per-  
sons, for restraining Violence and Oppres-  
sion, and securing the Peace, and Quiet,  
and good Order of the World: That  
Mankind should be sunk into such a dege-  
nerate State, as like Beasts of Prey to  
worry and devour one another, and not  
be kept in any tolerable Bounds, but by  
such severe and cruel Usage: That so ma-  
ny Lives must be sacrificed for the Pre-  
servation of others; such Desolation and  
De-

# 158 *The Government of our selves.*

SERM. Destruction brought upon the Face of the

V. Earth, and such a Scene of Blood and Slaughter; and this many Times out of absolute Necessity, and for the Security of every Thing that is dear and valuable to us: That Millions must be hired to sheath their Swords in one anothers Bowels, and resolutely destroy those whom they never knew or saw before, and therefore cannot be supposed to have any personal Hatred or Enmity against them.

THESE and many other Reflections, which are very obvious, give us a very melancholy Representation of Human Nature, and the sad State and Condition of the World. All this is truly deplorable; And the more it is so, the greater Commendation is it of that which would effectually remedy all these Evils and Disorders.

Now this is that which the private Rule of every Man over his own Spirit, and the Government of his Passions, would effectually do. For 'tis nothing else but Want of this Self-Government, and of keeping Peace at Home within our own Breasts, that is the Occasion of all the Confusions

and



and Disorders which happen abroad in the SERM.  
World. VV.

FROM whence come Wars and Fight-  
ings among you? (says the Apostle) come  
they not hence, even of your Lusts, that  
war in your Members? Ye lust and have  
not: Ye kill, and desire to have, and can-  
not obtain: Ye fight and war, yet ye have  
not, because ye ask not: Ye ask, and re-  
ceive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye  
may consume it upon your Lusts, James  
4. 1, &c. This is the true Cause of all  
these Evils. And if Men would but ap-  
ply themselves diligently to the ruling  
of their own Spirits, and regulating the in-  
ward Motions and Desires of their Souls:  
If instead of affecting to have Rule and  
Dominion over others, they would make  
it their Business to get the entire Command  
and Mastery over themselves; if instead of  
being hasty to revenge Injuries, they  
would be slow to Anger, and ready to  
pardon: if instead of giving way to Ambi-  
tion, and striving to enlarge their Territo-  
ries, and encrease their Goods, they  
would confine their Desires, and learn to  
be meek and lowly, and content with such  
Things

SERM. Things as they have: I say, if Men could  
 V. but once be brought to this, then would  
 Wars cease in all the World, the Bow  
 would be broken; and the Spear snapt a-  
 funder; and the Chariots burnt in the Fire:  
 Then would all private Injuries and Of-  
 fences be remov'd; there would be no  
 Acts of Violence and Oppression, no  
 breaking in or going out, and no Complain-  
 ing in our Streets.

THIS too would in a great measure su-  
 persede the Use of Might and Power, of  
 Civil Rule and Authority. For one main  
 End of all this is, to govern those who  
 cannot or will not govern themselves; to  
 keep those under Terror, and in due Sub-  
 jection, who have not the Rule of their  
 own Spirits, and the Command of them-  
 selves. So that if this Art of governing  
 our selves was more study'd and practis'd,  
 there would not be so much Use and so  
 great Necessity of political Rule and Au-  
 thority, especially of those severe Laws  
 which are made for the Restraint of Wick-  
 edness. *For the Law is not made for a  
 righteous Man, but for the Lawless and  
 Disobedient, 1 Tim. 1. 9. for those who*  
 have

have no Manner of Self-Government, no SERMS Rule or Command over their own Spi- V.rits ; to suppress those irregular Motions, from whence all those evil Works proceed, to which the Laws were design'd to be a Terror and a Punishment.

THE Consequence therefore of this private Rule and Government of our Spirits, would be very great and beneficial ; The World would soon be sensible of the good Effects of it, and be cleared of most of those Troubles and Confusions which now so much disturb us, and make our Lives so miserable and uneasy. So that, in the Issue and Event, 'tis as much above all external Might and Power, all publick Rule and Authority, as perfect Health and Soundness are preferable to the best Physick and most certain Cure.

(2.) ANOTHER very great and beneficial Consequence of this inward Rule and private Government of our selves, and whereby it exceeds all outward Power and Authority ; is, that 'tis *This* that makes outward Power and Authority it self useful and beneficial.



SERM. WHICH is worst, Tyranny and Oppression, or Anarchy and Confusion, I shall not at present dispute. But this I think is certain, and what all must agree to; that it is much better to be govern'd by good and wholesome Laws, and according to the Rules of Justice, Equity, and Mercy; than to be subject to arbitrary Will and unreasonable Humour, to impetuous Lust and Passion; against which there is no Security, but this private Rule and Government of a Man's self and his own Passions.

THERE is nothing more certain than this, that He is not fit to command others, who is not able to govern himself. For the same Passions that render Men uneasy to themselves, will make them troublesome to others. If Pride and Passion, Anger and Revenge, domineer at home in a Man's own Breast; they will prevail and bear Rule in his publick Management of Affairs. Might and Power are in themselves indifferent; and the good or bad Use of them, lies in the Application.

HE that by his Will is enabled to de-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
sign Good, and by his Wisdom to contrive <sup>V.</sup>  
it, and by his Actions to effect it, and so  
become a publick Benefactor to others,  
and useful to the World; is also by the  
same Will enabled to design Mischief, and  
by the same Wisdom to contrive it, and  
by the same Actions to bring it about, and  
so become pernicious, and a Plague to  
himself and others. When these Powers  
are directed and employ'd by Reason and  
Conscience, they become beneficial; when  
they are under the Government of blind  
Lust and Passion, they are mischievous and  
destructive. This is the Case of all those  
mighty *Nimrods*, and Hunters of Man-  
kind; and this is the true Reason of all  
those Oppressions, which are done under  
the Sun.

NOR does this hold only of those in the  
highest Station, but of all others who have  
any Power or Authority. None of these  
will be able to make a right Use of their  
Power, and employ it for the Good and  
Benefit of others; unless they be able to  
rule their own Spirits, and have got this  
Power over themselves. Without this,

SERM. no Man can make a good Parent or  
 V. Master, a faithful Friend or an useful  
 Neighbour, or discharge any of these  
 Relations which he may stand in to o-  
 thers. Nothing of this kind can be done,  
 where Passion has got the upper Hand  
 of Reason, and the Man is a Slave to  
 his own Lusts and Appetites. We must  
 first lay a Restraint upon these, before we  
 can duly exercise any Authority over  
 others.

THE like is true of those that are to o-  
 bey, as well as those that are to command.  
 He that has not learnt to obey the Rea-  
 son of his own Mind, will find it diffi-  
 cult to comply with the Command of  
 others. Our Minds when rightly instruct-  
 ed and informed, never dictate any thing  
 to us but what is reasonable ; But 'tis not  
 always thus with the Commands of others ;  
 And therefore he that cannot overcome his  
 Passions, and bring them to obey his  
 own Reason, will scarce ever subject  
 them to the Will and Pleasure of o-  
 thers. And if they who have a Right  
 to command us, should always do it  
 with Reason ; as Obedience here is no-  
 thing



thing else but Conformity to Reason, so SERM.  
it supposes a Power over those Passions V.  
which set themselves up against our  
Reason.

THE Consequence therefore of this private Rule of our own Spirits, is very great and extensive ; and affects all the relative Duties of Life. Without this, there is nothing incumbent on us, which we can duly discharge ; we shall be fit neither to govern, nor obey. The greatest external Might and Power, for want of this inward Oeconomy and Government, will prove either pernicious and destructive, or useless and insignificant. It will either be executed after a wrong Manner, or miss of due Obedience.

But (3.) To come nearer to our selves in our private Capacity. Another Consequence of this private Rule and Government of our selves, and whereby it exceeds all external Might and Power ; is, that it naturally tends to encrease our Liberty, and set us free from all those Lusts and Vices, which would enslave and debase us.

SERM.

V.



THE Liberty of a rational Creature, does not consist in an entire Exemption from all Laws and Rules whatever : This is not Liberty, but Licentiousness. The Freedom of a Man, is not to be plac'd in living as he lists, in being led away by his Lusts and Passions. If this were so, then the greatest Might and Power would bid the fairest for Liberty and Freedom. But it consists in following the Dictates of Reason, in being free to hearken to wise and sober Counsels; and always to do that, which upon the whole, is best and fittest to be done.

'Tis in This that the Freedom of God himself, who is unquestionably the freest Being, consists : In a Freedom from all foolish Passions, and partial Affections; and an entire Liberty to do always what is most agreeable to the strictest Rules of Reason, to perfect and unerring Wisdom.

HIS Freedom is indeed, and must necessarily be superior to ours, as he is infinitely above all those low and mean Motives which turn us aside from the strait Rule of Right ; For he cannot be tempted with Evil. But then we must make it our

Busi-

Business, to gain this Freedom in as great SERM.  
a Degree as we can: It must be our daily V.  
Endeavour, to get above all those Consi-  
derations which are apt to divert us from  
our Duty; to be able to despise present  
Pleasure and Pain, to renounce Honour,  
refuse Profit, and reject every thing for  
the sake of that which Reason tells us we  
ought to do; that we may have no Im-  
pediments, no Incumbrances upon us,  
but be perfectly free to follow that  
which is good, to go where ever our Du-  
ty calls us, and do whatever it requires of  
us.

THIS is true Liberty, and perfect Free-  
dom; and this is what the greatest exter-  
nal Might and Power can neither give us,  
nor take from us. It can only be had by  
ruling our selves, and governing our own  
Passions; And therefore this private Rule  
and Government is, in respect of this  
Consequence of it, infinitely preferable to  
any the greatest external Power and Au-  
thority. For the Consequence of it, is no  
less than a Freedom from the Slavery of  
Sin, and the Service of Satan; and as-  
serting our selves into the glorious Li-  
berty.



SERM. berty of the Sons of God ; the Per-  
 V. formance of the good Will and Pleasure  
 of our heavenly Father, and securing  
 our own everlasting Salvation. This is  
 the happy Consequence and Effect of be-  
 ing flow to Anger, and ruling our Spi-  
 rits. And how much preferable is this to  
 winning Battles, and taking Cities ? For  
 may not our Saviour's Words here be fit-  
 ly applied ? *What shall it profit a Man,*  
*if he shall gain the whole World, and lose*  
*his own Soul ?* if he shall conquer whole  
 Nations and Kingdoms, and not subdue  
 his own Lusts ; which amidst all his Con-  
 quests will sink him into the extreamest  
 Misery and Slavery, and make all his  
 Glory end in everlasting Shame and Con-  
 tempt.

WHAT has been said, is I hope suffici-  
 ent to recommend to you this private  
 Rule and Government of your Spirits ;  
 which is not only better and more ex-  
 cellent in it self than any external Pow-  
 er and Authority, but is also attended  
 with greater and more beneficial Con-  
 sequences, both in our publick and  
 private Capacities, both with respect to  
 this

*The Government of our selves.* 169

this World and another. These I have <sup>SERM.</sup>  
not had Time to enlarge upon, as they <sup>V.</sup>  
deserve; But I perswade my self that  
we cannot but be convinced, that most  
of our Troubles arise from the Want  
of due Rule and Government at Home;  
and that we might be much happier than  
we are, if our Passions were more under  
our Reason, and subject to the sober Di-  
ctates of our own Minds.

WHAT then remains; but that, lay-  
ing aside all Strife and Contention with  
others, every one should earnestly con-  
tend and strive for the Mastery over  
himself, and the Rule of his own Spi-  
rit; which is the greatest and truest  
Victory in the World. Instead of being  
overcome of Evil, we should over-  
come Evil with Good, and be slow to  
Anger rather than hasty to Revenge;  
and prefer the Conquest of our Passions,  
to the Gratification of them.

THIS is a Victory which will not  
indeed be soon or easily gain'd, but  
it will abundantly recompence us for  
all the Time and Pains we bestow up-  
on

SERM. on it. And though it may give us some  
 V. present Disturbance, yet it will grow  
 easier by Degrees, and at last yield  
 us the peaceable Fruit of Righteous-  
 ness, and in the End procure us ever-  
 lasting Life.



The





# The true Notion of Faith.



HEB. XI. I.

*Now Faith is the Substance  
of Things hoped for, the  
Evidence of Things not  
seen.*



THE Apostle's chief Design SERM. VI.  
in this Epistle to the *He-  
brews*, is to recommend to  
them the Christian Religi-  
on, which they had newly  
embraced ; to perswade them to persevere  
in the Profession of it, notwithstanding the  
Persecutions and Sufferings that attended  
it;

SERM. it ; and to encourage them to persist in  
 VI. their Confidence of Deliverance by the  
 coming of Jesus Christ, and in their Belief of the Promises they now had under the Gospel. To this End he gives them a List of the most eminent Heroes in the Old Testament ; and sets before them the wonderful Acts of Obedience and Self-denial they performed, by a stedfast Faith in God and his Promises, though they were under such an imperfect Dispensation.

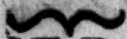
By these Examples, he exhorts them not to draw back from the Hope that was set before them, nor Apostatize from the Profession of the Christian Religion. For thus the Apostle forms his Argument at the 35<sup>th</sup> and following Verses of the preceding Chapter. *Cast not away therefore your Confidence, which hath great Recompence of Reward. For ye have great need of persisting, or Perseverance, (for so the Greek Word signifies here, which our Translation renders Patience, see Luke 8. 15.) that after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall*

*shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* SERM.  
*Now the Just shall live by Faith; but if* VL  
*any Man draw back, my Soul shall have*  
*no Pleasure in him.*

THIS is a Quotation from the Prophet *Habakkuk, chap. 2. ver. 3, 4.* where God had promis'd the Jews, that they should return from their Captivity in his appointed Time. Therefore, says the Prophet, though the Vision tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come. *Now the Just shall live by Faith, i. e.* the firm Belief of this Promise would support good Men in the Service of God under their Captivity in an Idolatrous Land; and their Faith should be rewarded with a return into their own Country, in God's appointed Time. In like manner, Christians, who have better Promises, of an heavenly Country; and who do, in this Faith, work that Righteousness which the Gospel requires; shall, for thus living by Faith in this World, live for ever in their Heavenly Country.

THIS is the Force of the Apostles Argument; that all these, whose Examples he enumerates and proposes in this Chap-



SERM. VI.  ter, were justify'd by the same Principle of Faith in God's Revelation, and for suffering under the same Hopes of future and invisible Blessings, that Christianity doth now propose to us. The Faith whereby those Believers of old pleased God, was nothing but a stedfast Reliance on the Goodness and Faithfulness of God, for those good Things, which either the Light of Nature, or particular Promises, had given them Grounds to hope for. And for the very same Faith and Hope, shall they, and all good Christians, be finally and compleatly rewarded together at the great Day of Judgment. And What that Faith is, which justify'd them, and will justify us, he tells us in the Text.

*Now Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen,*

My present Business shall be to consider, and explain this Notion of Faith: and then to make some Use and Improvement of it.

I. I WILL *consider*, and *explain* this Notion of *Faith*. Some will not allow this to be an exact Definition of Faith. But I hope to show that it is a very just Description of it; and that such a Faith as this, is sufficient to Salvation, since, as has already been hinted, and shall be more fully made out, it is That Faith whereby good Men of all Ages and Places, have recommended themselves to God, and which is now required of Christians, in order to their Acceptance and Salvation.

BUT, to consider the Expressions which the Apostle uses to describe this Faith. He tells us, that 'tis *the Substance of Things hoped for*.

THE Word which we here translate *Substance*, in the Old Testament answers to a *Hebrew* Word, which signifies *Expectation*. And 'tis used in the same Sense in the New Testament, where it signifies a *confident Expectation*. Thus 2 Cor. 9. 4. *lest we should be ashamed in this same confident Boasting*. The Apostle, as appears by the Context, had highly extolled their Charity,

SERM. ty, and confidently expected that they  
 VI. would be ready with their Collection a-  
 gainst it was called for. We meet with  
 the same Expression again, in *chap. 11.*  
 of that Epistle, *v. 17.* Thus also in this  
 Epistle to the *Hebrews, ch. 3. 14.* *We are*  
*made Partakers of Christ, if we hold the*  
*Beginning of our Confidence firm to the*  
*End*: Where the Apostle plainly means  
 their Expectation of that Reward, which  
 their Religion promised them. In all  
 which Places, the Word signifies the  
*Expectation of some future and unseen*  
*Good.*

AND this Import of the Word agrees  
 best with the Instances or Examples of  
 Faith, which the Apostle sets before us in  
 this Chapter; they being such as gene-  
 rally consisted in Men's Expectation of  
 some future Good, which, the Apostle  
 says in the Close of the Chapter, they  
 have not yet received compleatly. Whence  
 'tis manifest, that the Words ought to be  
 thus rendred, as bearing some such Sense  
 as this: *Faith is the confident Expecta-*  
*tion of Things hoped for; 'tis a firm Per-*  
*suaſion of the Being and Providence of*  
*God,*



God, and the Truth and Faithfulness of SERM.  
his Promises: The Evidence of Things VI.  
*not seen*: An Argument, or Demonstration,

of the Proof or Presence of Things not seen. For 'tis the Nature and Property of Faith, to represent to us the Reality and Existence of Things invisible to Sense, and the Presence of Things at a great Distance from us. Faith convinces us of the Truth and Certainty of Things, for which we have no ocular or sensible Demonstration.

So that these two Expressions or Descriptions of Faith, being added to one another without any Conjunction; seem to be design'd not to convey different Notions, but to be more fully expressive of the same Thing. Things hoped for, and Things not seen, are the same. Nor is there much Difference between the Words here render'd *Substance* and *Evidence*; both of them denoting a firm Perswasion, and full Conviction of the Truth and Certainty of something future and invisible.

THIS then is the Notion of Faith, which the Text furnishes us with; such a Satis-

SERM. faction and Assurance of absent and future

VI. Things, as makes us as certain of them, as if they were present to us, and we had them actually in Possession: Such a demonstrative Discovery of spiritual and invisible Things, as leaves us without any Doubt of their Existence; so that we assent to them as firmly, as if they fell under the Cognizance of our Senses.

There is indeed another Notion or Definition of Faith, very frequent amongst Scholastick Writers; that 'tis an Assent to the Truth of any Proposition, upon the Testimony of God. But this not being the Scripture Definition of Faith, I shall not enlarge upon it. This is indeed a true Definition, as it falls in with that in my Text: For we therefore expect Things hoped for, and are perswaded of Things not seen, because God has promised and revealed them to us. So that even This Faith, is an Assent grounded upon divine Testimony. But besides that this Notion is not expressed in Scripture Terms, 'tis too philosophical for common Use, and not so apt to influence our Practice, as this of the Apostles. Faith then  
be-

being a Belief of what God has revealed, and a firm Reliance upon him for the Performance of his Promises: the Nature and Degree of this Faith must be taken from those Revelations and Discoveries, God has been pleased to make of himself and his Thoughts and Designs towards us. No Body was, or can be required to believe, what was never proposed to him to believe.

AND therefore since, before the Fulness of Time which God had appointed to send his Son in, his Promises to his People were chiefly of temporal good Things; their Faith was answerable; *viz.* a Belief of the Goodness of God in general, and of the Truth of whatever particular Promises he had made them. And whereas now under the Gospel he has brought *Life and Immortality to Light*, Men are now to believe a future State of Rewards and Punishments, and to live and act here, as those who must give an Account of themselves hereafter.

THE Faith now required of Christians under the Gospel, is not only a general Perswasion of God's Mercy and Good-



SERM. will to those who seek to obey him ; an  
 VI. implicit Assurance of his rewarding those,  
 who, in the way of their Duty, rely upon him ; but it includes a particular and explicit Belief of another Life, of a future State after Death ; that though we know not when it will be, yet the Day is hastening on, and *the Hour is coming, in which all that are in their Graves shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth ; they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life ; and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation,* John 5. 28, 29.

THIS future State of Rewards and Punishments, the Christian Faith sets before us, and gives us as full Assurance of, as if we now heard our Saviour's Voice, and saw him *coming in the Clouds with Power and great Glory* ; so that we live, and act by it, as Men who have no Doubt concerning it, but reckon upon it, as most certain, and infallible ; and what, though it may now be at many Ages distance, will most assuredly come, and come home to us, and make us either happy or miserable, according as our Works have been.

THIS

It is this plain practical Notion of Faith, SERM.  
VI.  
such a Belief of future and invisible Rewards and Punishments, as will influence our present Conduct and Behaviour, which the Apostle means in the Text, and which he recommends to us in the Sequel of this Chapter. Let us therefore in the next Place,

II. See what *Use* and *Improvement* may be made of this Faith. Now concerning this Notion of Faith, I would observe,

1. That Faith does not consist, as some have made it, in the Belief of Things not understood. They can be no Objects of Faith; for what we understand not, we cannot believe. Had this been the Apostle's Notion of Faith; instead of stiling it, *the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen*; he should have describ'd it thus, *Now Faith is the Substance of Things not understood, the Evidence of Things incomprehensible.* Whereas it is impossible for us to believe what we cannot understand or comprehend, or to believe a Thing any further

SERM. than we understand and comprehend  
 VI. it.

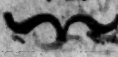
To try this, let us take Their Definition of Faith, who make it to be an Assent of the Mind to the Truth of any Proposition, upon sufficient Testimony; which in the Case of divine Faith, is the Testimony of God. 'Tis evident, that we must understand the Terms, in which the Proposition we assent to is expressed; we must know the Meaning and Signification of the Words, and their mutual Connection with, and Dependence upon one another, before we can assent to the Truth of the Proposition. If we know nothing of all this, we give our Assent to nothing, or rather we can give no Assent at all.

SUPPOSE the Proposition proposed to our Belief, be that which is now before us, of a Life to come, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, proportioned to the Good or Evil we have done here: We cannot give our Assent to the Truth of this Proposition, without knowing the Meaning of the several Terms; as what it is to live, or exist, and what Happiness or Misery is; and therefore though



*it does not yet appear what we shall be,* and we do not distinctly comprehend the Manner of our future Existence, and the Particulars wherein the Happiness or Misery of that State will consist; yet we know in general, both what it is to be, and what it is to be happy, or miserable; and can easily conceive it, not only possible, but from many Considerations highly probable, that God, who gave us our Beings, and made us capable of Happiness and Misery on this Side the Grave, can and will continue our Beings beyond the Grave, and make us capable of Happiness or Misery far superior to any we experience here. And since God, who cannot lye, has assured us that thus it shall be, we have all imaginable Reason to believe it upon his Testimony.

BUT then, this is plainly a rational Faith, and an intelligible Belief; and so must all Belief be. For the Things to be believed, are proposed to our Understanding, and are the Objects of our Reason; otherwise they could not be Matter of Faith. Whatever is absurd, and irrational,

SERM. VI.  nal, and implies a manifest Contradiction; as that a Part should be equal to, or greater than the whole; that the same Body should be in different Places at the same Time, and the like; cannot possibly be believed upon any Authority whatever. Nor has God any where required such a Belief from us, and therefore Men should not be so unreasonable as to require it from one another.

THE Truth is; the Faith or Belief which is so often recommended, and so much magnify'd in Scripture, is not a Belief of speculative, metaphysical Truths, nor of mere doctrinal Points; but of plain practical Truths, and of the great Articles of Morality and Virtue; of the absolute Necessity of *living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present World*; And all this grounded upon the express Declarations of God, in that Revelation which he has made to us by his Son Jesus Christ, and enforced by the particular Promise of a Life to come, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments.

THESE

THESE, I say, are the great Objects of SERM.  
our Christian Faith ; And though these VI.  
Things could not have been discovered by  
natural Reason, yet, now they are reveal-  
ed to us, we know and understand what  
we believe : And our Faith is not a blind,  
implicit Belief of obscure and unintelligi-  
ble Mysteries ; but a rational, well-  
grounded Assurance ; a satisfactory, and  
convincing Perswasion of the plainest, and  
most important Truths.

IN this Case, we are able, by the help  
of our Reason and Understanding, to com-  
prehend what we believe ; and we believe  
it, and are fully convinced of the Truth  
of it, from the Testimony of God. And  
therefore,

I OBSERVE, *2dly*, That the Faith we  
are now speaking of, as it consists in the  
Belief of those Promises which God has  
made us, of future and invisible Things,  
with a full Reliance on God for the Perfor-  
mance of them ; is what he takes well at  
our Hands, as a great Mark of Homage  
paid by us poor frail Creatures, to his  
Goodness and Truth, as well as to his  
Power and Wisdom ; and accepts it as an

Ac-



SERM. Acknowledgment of his peculiar Providence and Benignity to us. And therefore our Saviour tells us, *He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me,* John 12. 44. The Works of Nature show God's Wisdom and Power: But 'tis his peculiar Care of Mankind, most eminently discover'd in his Promises to them, that shews his Bounty and Goodness, and consequently engages their Hearts in Love and Affection to him. This Oblation of an Heart, fix'd with Dependence on, and Affection to him, is the most acceptable Tribute we can pay him; the Foundation of true Devotion, and Life of all Religion.

WHAT a Value he puts on this depending on his Word, and resting satisfy'd in his Promises, we have an Example in *Abraham*; whose *Faith* was counted to him for *Righteousness*. His relying firmly on the Promise of God, without any Doubt of its Performance, gave him the Name of the *Father of the Faithful*; and gained him so much Favour with the Almighty, that he was call'd the *Friend of God*; the highest and most glorious Title

tle that can be bestowed on a Creature. The Thing promised was no more, but a Son by his Wife *Sarah*; and a numerous Posterity from him, which should possess the Land of *Canaan*. These were but temporal Blessings: and (except the Birth of a Son) very remote, such as he should never live to see, nor in his own Person have the Benefit of. But because he question'd not the Performance of it; but rested fully satisfy'd in the Goodness, Truth, and Faithfulness of God who had promised; it was counted to him for Righteousness. 'Tis well worth our while, to see how *St. Paul* expresses it, *Rom. 4. 18—22. Who against Hope believed in Hope, that he might become the Father of many Nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy Seed be. And being not weak in his Faith, he considered not his own Body now dead, when he was above an hundred Years old; neither yet the Deadness of Sarah's Womb. He stagger'd not at the Promise of God through Unbelief; but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God, and being fully perswaded, that what he had promised, he was*  
able

SERM. able to perform. And therefore it was  
 VI. imputed to him for Righteousness.

St. Paul having here emphatically describ'd the Strength and Firmness of Abraham's Faith, informs us that thereby he gave Glory to God ; and therefore it was accounted to him for Righteousness. This is the Way that God deals with poor frail Mortals. He is graciously pleas'd to take it well of them ; and give it the Place of Righteousness, and a kind of Merit in his Sight ; if they believe his Promises, and have a stedfast Reliance upon his Veracity and Goodness. St. Paul tells us, in ver. 6. of this Chapter, that *without Faith it is impossible to please God* ; and at the same time informs us, what that Faith is : For, saith he, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Men can neither please God, nor make any Advancement in Religion, without being perswaded of God's Mercy and Good-will to those who seek to obey him, and without resting assured of his rewarding those who rely on him, for whatever,  
 either



either by the Light of Nature, or particular Promises, he has reveal'd to them of his tender Mercies, and taught them to expect from his Bounty.

SERM.

VI.

WHERE Men have no other Light, but that of Nature; there a general Belief of the Goodness of God to those who endeavour to please him, by living according to the best Light they have of their Duty; that it shall fare the better with them for having behaved themselves well, and that they shall by no Means loose the Reward of their Virtue, but shall be the happier for it some way or other, either here or hereafter: I say, There, such a Belief as this is sufficient. And this is what the natural Notions we have of God, will lead us to believe; And such a Belief as this, is justly due to a Being of infinite Goodness and Justice.

BUT where Men enjoy the Privilege of a divine Revelation, containing more express and particular Promises, than what the Light of Nature could discover; there they are bound to believe those Promises, and to rest assured of their Accomplishment. This is a Piece of Homage due to  
infi-

SERM. Infinite Power and Truth; for faithful  
 VI. *and able is he who has promised.*

AND therefore, since the Christian Revelation has set before us a Life to come, an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, according as we have behav'd our selves here: 'Tis our Duty firmly to believe a Life to come, and to let this Belief influence our Practice; to rejoice in hope of the Glory which shall be revealed; and, when ever it is necessary, to be willing for the sake of those Promises of future good Things, which God has made us, to forego our present Ease and Pleasure, and to suffer any Hardships we may meet with here in the Discharge of our Duty; that we may escape the Wrath reveal'd from Heaven, against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men.

THUS to behave our selves under the Gospel Dispensation, to live and act upon the certain Prospect of that future State, which is there revealed to us: To do, and suffer any Thing here for God's Sake, and in Obedience to his Commands, and to trust him for our Reward hereafter: This is the best and truest Expression of

our Faith; and more acceptable to God, SERM.  
VI.  
than any other Instance, or all of them  
taken together, wherein we can practise  
this Virtue. Hence therefore in the

3. Place, We may learn wherein the  
Merit (if I may so call it) of Faith con-  
sists; or what it is which makes it so ac-  
ceptable to God, and so available to Men's  
Salvation.

MERIT, in the strict and proper Sense  
of that Word, we disclaim; and there-  
fore, I shall rather chuse to call it, the  
Virtue of Faith. And I say, there is no  
Virtue in Faith, if we take the Schola-  
stick Notion of it, as it consists in the As-  
sent of the Mind to the Truth of any  
Proposition upon sufficient Evidence. For  
where there is, or appears to be sufficient  
Evidence, we cannot withhold our As-  
sent: Or, in other Words, we cannot but  
believe. And surely no one will say,  
there is any Virtue in doing that which  
we cannot help.

AND therefore how large soever or  
explicit our Creed may be, and though  
we branch it out into never so many Par-  
ticulars; there is no Virtue in all this;  
be-



SERM. because every Man is not only obliged,  
 VI. but cannot help believing every Thing  
 which he has sufficient Evidence of the  
 Truth of. And without sufficient Evi-  
 dence, there can be no Belief. There may  
 be Credulity, or Superstition, Hypocrisy,  
 and Dissimulation; but there can be no  
 such Thing as Faith.

BUT though there is no Virtue in bare  
 Belief, yet it is both virtuous and Praise-  
 worthy, when this Belief is the Result of  
 our own Enquiries; when, in a Matter  
 of such Importance as Religion, we  
 use our best Endeavours to come to the  
 Knowledge of the Truth; when we are  
 teachable and tractable, ready to receive  
 Instruction, and willing to submit and  
 yield to such Evidence as the Case will  
 bear, without obstinately standing out,  
 and insisting upon such Proofs as are nei-  
 ther proper, nor possible to be had.

THUS in the Case before us, 'tis neither  
 fit, nor reasonable, nor perhaps possible  
 for us, to have ocular and sensible De-  
 monstration of a future State. 'Tis how-  
 ever manifestly inconsistent with the Na-  
 ture of Faith; For *Faith*, as the Apostle  
 tells

tells us, *is the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidences of Things not seen.* But the same Apostle tells us in another Place, *Rom. 8. 24, 25. That we are saved by Hope, i. e. our Salvation is now only in Hope.* And then he explains the Nature of this Virtue: *But Hope that is seen, is not Hope; for what a Man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with Patience wait for it.* 'Tis therefore inconsistent with the Nature of Faith, which is always attended with Hope, to have sensible Demonstration or present Possession of what we believe and hope for. Both Faith and Hope relate to Things not in present Possession or Enjoyment. For what a Man hath, and seeth in his own Hands, he no longer hopes for, or believes: But if he hopes for and believes what is out of Sight, and yet to come; then does he with Patience wait for it. And this patient waiting for our Reward in Heaven, and, as it were, living upon the Hopes of our future Inheritance; and, out of a firm Belief that we shall not miss of it, going on in the constant and cheerful Performance of our Duty, is That

SERM.  
VI.  
~~~~~

SERM. wherein the Virtue of Faith consists. This
 VI. is doing the greatest Honour that is possible for us to do; to the divine Attributes and Perfections; to the Justice and Goodness, the Truth and Veracity, and Power of God. *And if we had all Faith, so that we could remove Mountains; and understood all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; if we perfectly comprehended the abstrusest Points, and were able to reach the utmost Heights, or fathom the deep Things of God; or, which some value beyond all this, if we could reconcile and believe Contradictions; yet all this would not render us so acceptable to God, as this single Instance or Expression of our Faith. And therefore,*

4. Hence appears the great Unreasonableness and Sinfulness of Infidelity. I speak not now of Infidelity at large, nor will the Time permit me; but of that particular Instance of it, which consists in doubting of or denying a Life to come, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments.

THIS is a Point which we have as much Proof of, as the Case will admit. *Our Life*

Life is bid with Christ, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. The Thing it self is future and invifible, and therefore 'tis impoffible we fhould have a prefent Sight and Poffeffion of it. But when *Chrift who is our Life fhall appear, we alfo fhall appear with him in Glory.* For this we have the Promife of God, who cannot lie. And as it is unreafonable to difbelieve it for Want of the Evidence of Senfe; fo 'tis wicked and highly reflecting upon God, to doubt of it, after he has given us fuch an exprefs Affurance of it by fo clear a Revelation.

WE often rely upon Mens Veracity for the Performance of their Promifes, and make no Scruple fo to do. For though they do not prefently make good their Promifes, yet, where we efteem them Perfons of Probity and Credit, we look upon what they have promis'd, and are to perform at fuch a Time, as if it were actually prefent, and we had it in Poffeffion. How much more is all this Trust and Affiance due to God, who is Truth it felf, and Goodnefs it felf, and who can do what ever he pleafes? *who is not a Man that he fhould lie;*

SERM. *neither the Son of Man that he should re-*
 VI. *pent. Hath he said, and shall he not do*
it? Or, hath he spoken, and shall he not
make it good? Num. 23. 19.

THE natural Notions which we have of God, will make Faith an easy Virtue, and dispose us to trust in him, and rely upon him for the Performance of whatever he has said. *They that know thy Name*, says the Psalmist; they that are acquainted with the Nature of God, and his Attributes; who have studied the Works of Creation, and the Wonders of Providence; they that thus know thy Name, *will put their Trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee*, Psal. 9. 10.

So that Infidelity either argues an Ignorance of God, which is inexcusable, because God has so far manifested himself to Men by the Light of Nature, as to leave no room to doubt of his Truth or Power in the Performance of his Promises; or it casts the highest Reflection upon him, by calling these Attributes in Question, and making him not only altogether, but even worse than such an one as our selves.

selves. Upon both which Accounts, it is SERM.
highly unreasonable and sinful. VI.

5. and Lastly, FROM the whole we
should be perswaded, *to add to our Faith*
Virtue, and to let our Belief of another
Life influence our present Carriage and
Behaviour. This is what we may easily
do, if we would but apply our selves to
it in good earnest.

THE greatest Advantage which the
Temptations we meet with here have o-
ver us, consists in their being present and
sensible; and the greatest Disadvantage
which the Considerations of another Life
lie under, is their being future and invisi-
ble. But a firm and lively Faith would
soon remove this Difficulty. For 'tis the
Nature of Faith to give the Mind a Sight
of those Things which are invisible to our
outward Senses; and to set before us, and
make present to us, those Things which
are future and at a Distance, and not to
come to pass 'till many Ages. Faith di-
minishes the Distance, and brings them
home to us, and, by giving us an undoubt-
ed Assurance of them, makes them affect
us as if they were actually present. Whence

SERM. it is that the Scriptures speak of the invi-
 VL. sible State of Things, as if it were now
 in view; of our future Reward, as if we
 were in actual Possession of it. Thus in
ver. 27th of this Chapter, 'tis said of
Moses, that *he endured*, i. e. could easily
 bear, the Wrath of Pharaoh, *as seeing*
him who is invisible, the invisible One.
 By Faith he beheld the omnipotent Ju-
 stice of the King immortal and invisible.

Thus our Saviour says of *Abraham*,
 that *he rejoiced to see his Day, and he*
saw it, and was glad, John 8. 56. i. e.
 He earnestly desired and longed to
 see it, and saw it at that Distance by
 Faith.

Thus St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*,
 that *their Fathers did all eat the same*
spiritual Meat, and did all drink the
same spiritual Drink with us; for they
drank of that spiritual Rock which fol-
lowed them, and that Rock was Christ,
 1 Cor. 10. 3. i. e. The Water that came
 out of the Rock, and the Manna that de-
 scended from Heaven, were Types and
 Figures of our Saviour Christ; And by
 their due and grateful Participation of
 them,

them, they may be said to have fed upon SERM. 2
 Christ, in the same spiritual Sense (tho' VL
 not so explicitly) as we Christians do by
 the sincere and open Profession of his Do-
 ctrine and Religion.

WE are not yet in Heaven, nor has the
 Life to come taken Place; and yet we are
 said *even now to be quickned together with*
Christ, to be saved by Grace, to be raised
up together, and made to sit together in
heavenly Places in Christ Jesus, Eph. 2.
5, 6.

IN Confidence of this future Reward,
 the Apostles and first Christians underwent
 the severest Tryals. *They took joyfully*
the spoiling of their Goods; knowing in
themselves, that they had in Heaven a
better, and an enduring Substance, ch. 10.
ver. 34. And lov'd not their Lives unto the
Death, Rev. 12. 11. i. e. They counted
not their Lives dear unto them, Acts 20.
 24. when-ever the parting with them was
 necessary to obtain Life everlasting. Thus
 powerfully did this Faith work in them.
 And if We have the same Faith, it will
 have the same Effect upon us, and show
 it self by our Works, by the Confor-

SERM. mity of our Lives to the Commands of
 VI. God.

IF it should be allowed, that they had in some Respects the Advantage of us; and were more happily situated to obtain a fuller Assurance of Faith than we: It cannot be deny'd that we have, in other Respects, the Advantage of them. We believe a future State upon the same Revelation with them; which Revelation is no new Thing to us, as it was to them; but has stood the Test of many Ages, without being found defective in any Point, either by Friends or Enemies; and has been further confirmed by the Accomplishment of several remarkable Events therein foretold, and which They never saw come to pass.

AND in Matters of Practice, which is the main Thing of all, our Faith has not those Difficulties to struggle with, which Theirs had. *We have not yet resisted unto Blood, striving against Sin; nor hath any Temptation taken us, but what is common to Men, 1 Cor. 10. 13.* and which we might reasonably expect from the natural and ordinary Course of Things. *Deny-*
ing

ing Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and SERM.
 living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this VI.
 present World, notwithstanding the Temp-

tations we may meet with to the contra-
 ry, from the Pleasures and Allurements
 of Sin ; is all that is now required of us.
 And if our Belief of the Terrors of a fu-
 ture and invisible State, and of the end-
 less Joys and Happiness of a Life to come,
 will not enable us to do this ; either we
 do not believe these Things, or we do
 not reflect often and seriously upon them,
 and when we have most Occasion for the
 Assistance of Faith ; I mean, when Temp-
 tations present themselves to us, and the
 World and the Devil are busy at work
 upon us to seduce us into Sin. For such a
 Faith so apply'd, could not fail of produ-
 cing a suitable Practice, and securing uni-
 versal Obedience to the Laws of God ; by
 which Means we should come at last to
receive the End of our Faith, even the
Salvation of our Souls.

The



The Cure of the Diseases of the Soul,



PSAL. xli. 4.

*I said, Lord, be merciful
unto me; heal my Soul,
for I have sinned against
thee.*

SERM.
VII.



IS a very melancholy Consideration, that Men who profess Religion, and consequently believe that they have Souls as well as Bodies, and that their Souls shall survive the Grave, and live for ever in another State; should be so partial as to spend so much Time

Time and Pains upon their Bodies, whilst they take little or no Care of their Souls, which want it as much as their Bodies, and deserve it much more.

SERM.

VIL.

THIS is in nothing more evident, than in this; that as soon as the Body is afflicted with any Distemper from within, or has received any Hurt or Injury from without, or originally labours under any Weakness or Deformity; they immediately look out for proper Remedies, and spare no Pains or Cost to procure them; whilst they tamely suffer their Souls to be over-run with numberless Distempers, and to be sick even unto Death without making any Attempts towards their Recovery. Nor do they think any bodily Illness so great, nor any Time of Life so late, as should discourage them from endeavouring to be restor'd to Health and Soundness; whilst the Diseases of the Mind are sometimes thought too great to be cur'd, and are mostly deferred from Time to Time, till it often happens to be too late to set about it.

THAT the Mind has its Distempers and Diseases, its Weaknesses and Deformities,

In-

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Infirmities and Imperfections, as well as the Body; can be deny'd by none who have lived like Creatures endued with rational Souls, and have made any Observation either upon themselves or others. And that these are every whit as fatal to the Soul, and as destructive of its Health and Constitution as the most dangerous Distempers are to the Body; is most certain. And that they are altogether as capable of being heal'd and cur'd, if we use the proper Methods, will appear in the following Discourse; wherein I shall,

I. LAY before you a brief View of the Distempers and Diseases of the Soul.

II. I SHALL show the great Danger of these Distempers. And,

III. DIRECT you to the proper Methods of curing them.

I. I SHALL lay before you a brief View of the *Distempers* and *Diseases* of the Soul.

UNDER these Terms I comprehend all those Defections from Reason, and Deviations from the eternal Rule of Right, which

which we see Men daily guilty of. All SEKM. those irregular Lusts, and inordinate Passions and Affections, which hurry us on to vicious Acts, and by Degrees enslave us to sinful Habits. Mens Sins and Vices are the Distempers and Diseases of their Souls, and argue a weak and broken Constitution of Mind, a crooked and deformed Disposition of Will, a base and sordid Temper of Spirit. The World is, in this Respect, as well as upon account of bodily Diseases and Infirmities, a large Hospital. Lust and Sloth; Pride, Covetousness and Ambition; Anger and Passion, Malice, Hatred, Envy and ill Will, are as so many Sores and Sickneses, Distortions and Luxations, Boils, Ulcers and Wounds to the Soul; and ought to move our Pity and Compassion, as much as they do when we see Mens Bodies affected with them. VII

THESE may, all of them, very properly be stil'd the Distempers and Diseases of the Soul; as being the very same, and bearing the same Relation to that, as bodily Distempers do to the Body. They argue as much Weakness and Infirmary, and

SERM. and Sickness in the Soul; as an ill Ap-
 PETITE; a feeble Constitution; weak, di-
 STORTED, and broken Limbs, do in the Bo-
 dy.

AND 'tis very evident from Mens Be-
 haviour upon these Occasions, that they
 themselves have this very Notion of their
 Sins, and look upon them as so many Di-
 seases and Deformities. Hence it is that
 in many Cases they are as much ashamed
 of their Sins, as they are of any bodily
 Defect and Deformity; and use as much
 Art and Care to cover and palliate any
 base and wicked Action, as they do to
 conceal an ill Face or a bad Complexion;
 a blind or squinting Eye; a weak or
 crooked Limb, or any Thing else that
 looks monstrous and ill favour'd. Hence
 also 'tis usual to excuse those Vices which
 are more peculiarly incident to any parti-
 cular Part of our Lives, by calling them
 the Diseases and Distempers of that Age
 of Life. Thus Covetousness and Peevish-
 ness are stiled the Distempers of old Age;
 and Lust, and Ambition, and Extrava-
 gance, pass for the Heats and Feavers of
 Youth.

AND

AND thus far the Parallel holds good SERM. VII.
between the Sins and Vices, and the Distempers and Infirmities of Men; that the one are as truly the Diseases and Disorders of the Mind, as the other are of the Body. But there is this remarkable Difference between the Vices of the Soul, and the Distempers of the Body; that the Distempers of the Body are involuntary, and therefore innocent, but the Vices of the Soul are voluntary, and by consequence make the Patient guilty. These last are of our own seeking, and are fitter to move our Anger than our Pity; but the other we suffer without being able to prevent them, and therefore they deserve our Pity. Besides which, the moral Defects and Deformities of the Mind have this further Advantage above the natural Defects of the Body; that they are, as I shall show, possible to be cured by the Grace of God, in Conjunction with our Care and Endeavour in the Use of proper Remedies; whereas no Art or Skill, no Labour or Pains, can ever help or remove many of the natural Defects and Deformities of the Body.

2

Thus

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THUS we see that the Sins and Vices of Men are truly and properly the Distempers and Diseases of their Souls. And as these proceed from Men's Passions prevailing over their Reason; so every Excess of Passion, every Inordinacy of Appetite, and every wandering of Desire, even in lesser Degrees and smaller Instances, is an Indisposition and an Infirmitie of Mind; and what, if not timely taken Care of, will grow into a confirm'd and settled Distemper, and become downright Sickness.

OUR Passions and Affections in themselves, and as they were first planted in us by the great and wise Author of our Being, are not only innocent, but very good. They are all useful Instruments of our Happiness, if rightly manag'd, and well employ'd. None of them are criminal or culpable radically and in their whole Nature, but then only when they are apply'd to wrong Objects, or to right ones in a wrong Measure and Degree; when they are rais'd or sunk besides their due Temper, and beyond what the Occasion which first called them forth will justify.

stify. Upon this Account some of the SERM.
Passions and Affections are branded with VII.
very bad Names ; but these are either
mere Excesses of the Passions, and not the
Passions themselves ; or they are mix'd and
compound ones, which is our own Work,
and no Part of God's Creation. Of this
Sort we may reckon Anger and Envy.
Anger is an Uneasiness or Discomposure
of the Mind, upon the Receipt of any In-
jury, with a present Purpose of Revenge.
Envy is an Uneasiness of Mind, caused
by the Consideration of a Good we desire,
obtain'd by one we think either should not
have had it at all, or not before us ; and is
therefore made up of Hatred and Grief.
Which Passions having in them some mix-
ed Considerations of our selves and others,
are not therefore to be found in all Men ;
because those other Parts, of valuing their
Merits, or intending Revenge, is wanting
in them. But still the simple Passions,
out of which these compound ones are
form'd, are in themselves good, very use-
ful and lawful Affections, and what all
Men do, more or less, partake of ;
and they are never culpable or vi-
cious,

SERM. cious, but in the Case already menti-
 VII. oned.

Now 'tis the proper Business and Employment of our Reason and Understanding, of our Liberty and Freedom, of our Agency and Self-motion: 'Tis the very End and Use of these noble Faculties; to maintain the Supremacy of the Mind over all the inferior Appetites and Passions, to over-rule all Emotions, to curb every excessive Desire, and to subdue every inordinate Affection; in a word, to govern and regulate the whole *Posse* of our Passions, so as to direct them to their proper Objects, and keep them within due Bounds.

AND whenever any of them break loose from the Restraint of Reason, either by mistaking or exceeding their Object; when-ever they grow too powerful for the governing Principle within us, and usurp an Authority over it, so as to hurry us on to those Actions which we cannot justify, and make us condemn our selves in those Things which we allow, and bring us into the State of that unhappy Complainer describ'd by the Apostle,

Rom.

Rom. 7. 15. That which I do, I allow SERM.
VII.
not : For what I would, that do I not ;
but what I hate, that do I : When-ever,
 I say, and in what-ever Instances, this is
 the Case ; our Soul is distemper'd and dis-
 eased ; 'tis sick, and out of Order ; and
 unable to discharge its proper Office and
 Duty. These are all of them evident
 Signs of a weak and impotent State of
 Mind ; which either hath lost, or never
 had the Government of it self.

THERE are few People perfectly free
 from these Distempers and Diseases ; and
 they who think themselves the freest, are
 many Times the furthest from being so.
 For it requires a great deal of Care and
 Study to know our selves, especially our
 Weaknesses and Imperfections, our Faults
 and Follies. These are what our Partia-
 lity and Self-love hide from us ; and it
 must be a close and narrow Observation of
 our selves, that must discover them ; and
 when we have done all we can, we may
 be the last that shall know them, and per-
 haps may never know them at all. For
 few Men will give themselves the lei-
 sure, and fewer yet take the right Method

SEK M. of examining themselves as they should do.

VII.

THIS is what St. *Paul* means, when he says, *Yea, I judge not my own self. For I know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justify'd; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. He knew there was much Blindness and Deceitfulness in the Heart of every sinful Man, and that there was no absolute depending upon that Testimony. He would therefore appeal to a higher Judge, that neither would deceive, nor could be deceived; and That was the Lord.

'Tis with Difficulty that we come at a thorough Knowledge of the Failings and Imperfections of those with whom we converse. Indeed great and notorious Instances cannot escape us. When the Passions show themselves in their full Strength, they are known by every Body: And when we see Men flying out into the Height of Anger and Passion upon little or no Provocation, and venting their Spleen upon every Thing and Person that comes in their Way; 'tis plain, that they are under the Power of Anger: This is their Distemper and Disease. In like manner, when

when we know others to be Companions of Rioters, to live in the Lusts of the Flesh, *committing all Uncleanness with Greediness*; 'tis evident that their Souls are exceedingly out of Order, and that they are over-run, and almost eaten up with Intemperance and Uncleanness. If we behold others uneasy under every little Loss or Disappointment they meet with, perpetually aspiring after the highest Posts of Honour and Profit, and impatient of having others preferr'd before them; 'tis manifest that they are sick at the very Heart, of Pride and Covetousness, Envy and Ambition, and feel as much racking Pain, as they would under a Fit of the Gout or Stone. But tho' indeed the Passions when they thus show themselves in their full Strength, are known by every Body; yet the gentle Stroaks, and slight Touches of them are generally overlook'd or mistaken.

AND these Distempers and Diseases of the Mind, do in this also further partake of the Nature of bodily Distempers, in that they affect the Body much after the same Manner as bodily Distempers them-

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selves do. They deject our Spirits, and
 destroy our Appetite. They make the
 Heart sad, and disturb the Head. They
 unbrace the Nerves, and enfeeble the Joints.
 They destroy the natural Heat, and dry up
 the Juices of the Body, and make the Flesh
 to pine away. They change the Tone of
 the Voice, and spoil the very Complexi-
 on and Features of the Face, and quite
 transform us into other Men. This is ap-
 parently the Case of immoderate Fear and
 Hope, excessive Grief and Joy, inordinate
 Desire and Aversion, insatiable Covetous-
 ness and Ambition, boundless Pride and
 Vain-glory, fierce Anger and Revenge,
 implacable Malice, Hatred, Envy, and
 Ill-will. All these have the Effects now
 mentioned, upon the outward Man.

Thus the Scripture remarks of *Cain*,
 when he envy'd his Brother's Righte-
 ousness and Acceptance with God, and
 upon that Account was compassing his
 Death; that *he was very wroth, and his*
Countenance fell, Gen. 4. 5. And 'tis re-
 corded of *Abab*, when he had set his
 Heart upon *Naboth's Vineyard*, and could
 not obtain it, *that he came into his House*
heavy

heavy and displeased; and he laid him SERM.
drown upon his Bed, and turned away VII.
his Face, and would eat no Bread, 1 Kings

21. 4. Thus also the Pride and Haughtiness of *Haman*, and the Envy and Ill-will which he conceived against *Mordecai* for not gratifying his Pride, prey'd upon him to that Degree, that he took no Pleasure in any Thing which he had. For when he had recourted to his Friends the Glory of his Riches, and the Multitude of his Children, and all the Things wherein the King had promoted and advanced him above all others; in the Conclusion, he gives this miserable Account of himself, *Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.* So dismal are the Effects of these Passions, and such a sad and visible Alteration do they make in us for the worse. This we can quickly discern in others, and can with Salt and Sharpness enough upbraid them for their great Folly and Weakness; and we may be sure that others make the same Observations upon us, when we are under the like Transports, and either pity or despise us at their Hearts,

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BUT besides these enormous Excesses of Passion, which cannot escape our Notice; there are others in a less Degree, and which many Times pass unobserved in our selves and others. For all Passion, when we consider it as a Weakness and Distemper, is a Defection from right Reason; which though, like a Deviation from a strait Line, it admits of infinite Degrees, yet in every one of these 'tis culpable and criminal, and ought to be cur'd or prevented.

WHENEVER therefore we are mov'd beyond what the Occasion will justify: Whenever our Passions exceed their Object, and rise higher than the Value and Importance of the Matter about which they are employ'd: When-ever they blind our Reason, and pervert our Judgment, and cast a Mist before our Eyes, so that we cannot see Things in a true Light: When-ever they make us transgress the Rules, not perhaps of Religion, but of good Manners, and betray us into such Actions and Behaviour, as we are, afterwards ashamed of, and blush at: When-ever our Passions begin to discover themselves in

3

these

these and such like Instances; though they are not culpable and criminal, nor these Instances to be look'd upon as so many Sins, yet they are Weaknesses and Imperfections, and what we should strive to amend and avoid if we would be perfect. They are manifest Signs of an impotent, feeble, and sickly State of Mind. They show that all is not right within us; that we are really indisposed, and out of Order; and if we do not stop the Progress of our Distemper, it will grow upon us, and prove fatal at the last. This brings me to the

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II. Thing I am to show; The great Danger of these Distempers and Diseases of the Mind.

WE have seen that the several Passions, when they exceed their Bounds, and put Men either beside the Use of their Reason, or upon acting any Thing contrary to it, may justly be look'd upon as so many Diseases and Distempers in the Soul; that Wrath, Avarice, Envy and Ambition, are as much Sores to the Soul, as Boils, Wounds, or Ulcers are to the Body; and

SERM. I add, much more dangerous. An evil

VII. Disposition is the worst of Evils, and
 ~~~~~ Vice the most deplorable of all Distem-

pers. For Innocence is the Health of the Soul; and though it will not heal, it will at least comfort and support us under the most sensible Pains and Distempers of the Body. *The Spirit of a Man*, says Solomon, *will sustain his Infirmities, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. 18.

14. So long as Virtue preserves our Courage, outward Afflictions, of what kind soever, may be born: But when, through Vice, the Soul becomes mean and abject; nothing is tolerable. A good Conscience will bear us up under any Calamity which can befall us. But when the Conscience is wounded with Guilt; when that which should have been our Comfort in Trouble, has lost its Peace and Quiet; when that which should have been our Remedy is sick it self, and wants to be cured; what Relief is there to be found for this, and who is he that can bear it?

THE inward Pain, and Anguish, and Remorse, which are the inseparable Attendants of Vice and Wickedness, do far



exceed any Thing which we suffer from SERM.  
the Diseases and Disorders of the Body. VII.

And though all Pain, properly speaking, be in the Mind, yet that which arises from its own irregular Motions is more quick and piercing than that which is excited from any Thing without us; and will, if not timely taken Care of, prove more lasting, and be attended with worse Effects. And this is that which I design at present to insist on, to show the dangerous and mischievous Nature of these Distempers of the Mind, above those of the Body; *viz.* the ill Influence and Effect they have upon our future State and Being. They make us more miserable at present than any bodily Sickness or Infirmary, but this is nothing in comparison of what they will bring upon us hereafter.

In order to show this, it is to be observed, and constant Experience attests the Truth of the Observation, that all Sin and Wickedness, every irregular Lust and disorderly Passion which we indulge, has a natural Tendency to change the Frame and Temper of our Minds for the worse, to breed lasting Indispositions in us, and

by

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by that Means to bring us to a fixt and permanent State of that Misery and Unhappiness, which, as rational Creatures, is proper to us, and we are capable of.

THERE is a natural Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, Sin and Misery, as between Cause and Effect. And as good Men, by a Life of Holiness and Virtue in this World, naturally grow up into the heavenly State; and according to the ordinary Course of Things, and the establish'd Laws of the moral Part of the Creation, secure to themselves the Happiness of the next Life; so wicked Men, by a Life of Sin and Wickedness in this World, naturally degenerate into the hellish State, and lay the Foundation of their Misery in the next Life; and all this by the proper Effect and Influence, and the natural Workings of those ill Dispositions, and vicious Habits they have contracted.

FOR though it should be granted, as indeed it cannot be deny'd, that some Vices, especially those of the grosser Kind, are in a great Measure owing to bodily Complexion, as Anger and Passion, Intemperance

temperance and Uncleanneſs, and therefore that our Inclination and Diſpoſition to theſe Vices will ceaſe of Courſe upon the Soul's being ſeparated from the Body, the Effect ceaſing when the Cauſe is removed: Yet upon further Examination, this will not be found to be altogether true; if we may judge of what will be hereafter, from what we ſee at preſent. For 'tis no uncommon Thing to ſee Men who are paſt ſinning, who are diſabled from committing the outward Act of theſe Vices, through natural Decay, or ſome accidental Weakneſs and Infirmary, thro' Sickneſs or old Age; ſtill retaining a ſtrong inward Liking and Affection for them, and betraying this upon all Occaſions, and by all the Ways which they have left them to make uſe of; which is an undeniable Argument, that though theſe vicious Diſpoſitions owe their Riſe to the Body, they will not fall with that.

22 If when a Man is paſt the Commiſſion of any Sin, he can talk of it with Greedineſs, can recal it to Mind, and recount it to others, and dwell upon the Story with a ſenſible Air of Pleaſure and



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Satisfaction; this shows that the Vice which begun in the Body, terminates in the Mind, and by being long indulg'd and continued in, has seized and infected the Soul it self, and will stick by it in its State of Separation, and be a continual Plague and Torment to it. The first Disposition which sprang from the Body, is grown a confirmed and settled Habit in the Soul, and is of the Nature of all other Habits, strong and lasting; and will, if the Soul goes off with it, prove as lasting as that, and cleave to it for ever.

AND if this be the Case of those Sins which arise from bodily Constitution and Complexion, if they thus taint and infect the Mind it self, and leave a lasting and bad Impression upon it; much more may we expect that this will be the Effect of those Sins, which are properly the Sins of the Mind, and in which the Body has little or no Share, those refin'd and spiritual Sins of Pride, Malice, Envy, Impatience, Unthankfulness, Discontent, Blasphemy, and Enmity to God and Goodness. These arise not from the Body, but from the Mind it self; not from any corporeal

real Impressions, or disorderly Motions of SER. M. the Blood and Spirits, but from the irregu- VII. lar Motions of the Mind, from the Misconduct of our intellectual Faculties, from the Abuse of our Reason, from want of serious Thought, Consideration, and Reflection. So that notwithstanding the Union of the Soul with the Body, these Vices having nothing to do with the Body. Those ill Habits and Dispositions which, by being long comply'd with and indulged, they will breed in the Soul; will make such Impressions upon it, as shall continue after this Union is dissolv'd, and affect its State for ever.

AND it may be laid down as a general and universal Truth, that all Acts of Sin and Wickedness whatever, and whensoever they take their first Rise, do, especially when they grow into Habits, breed settled Dispositions in the Soul to those Vices; And these Dispositions destroy that Purity of Heart, that right Frame of Spirit, that Uprightness and Integrity, that generous Light and Freedom of Mind, wherein Virtue and Happiness consist, and introduce Crookedness and Deformity,

SERM. mity, Depravity and Perverseness of Temper; they bring Darkeness, Disorder and Confusion upon our Faculties; which will not only incapacitate us for Happiness, but must for ever make us miserable.

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FOR these Dispositions will remain after all those Things are done away, by which they were at first bred, and have since been continually fed; and there will be nothing in another World to satisfy or appease their Cravings. To which Purpose we may apply that Passage in the 18th of Rev. ver. 14. *The Fruits that thy Soul tasted after are departed from thee, and all Things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee; and thou shalt find them no more at all.* And what great Misery and Unhappiness this will bring upon us in another Life, we may in some Measure conceive from what we experience in this. For if Hope deferred maketh the Heart sick, and the short Absence of any Thing which we strongly desire, be such an Uneasiness to us; what will it be, to live for ever without those Things in which alone we can take any Pleasure; to be continually tormented with



with a Variety of strong and impetuous SERMON  
Desires, without any Thing to satisfy and VII:  
appease them; to be perpetually under the  
Rage of Lust, Pride; Envy, Malice; and  
Cruelty; without any Objects whereon to  
vent these Passions, and spend their Force?  
Can any Thing in the whole World be  
conceived more miserable than such a State  
as this? And yet this must of Necessity, in  
the natural Course of Things, be the Case  
of all wicked Men in another Life; unless  
God should, by an arbitrary Act of his  
Power, put an End to their Beings, or  
by a Miracle transform them from Devils  
into Angels of Light; neither of which  
have we any Ground or Reason to expect:

AND this may suffice to show the great  
Difference between the Diseases and Di-  
stempers of the Mind and those of the Bo-  
dy, and the great Mischief and Danger of  
the one above that of the other. The Di-  
stempers and Diseases of the Body are in  
themselves but light and inconsiderable,  
and can have but a short and transient  
Effect upon us; since, at most, they can  
last no longer than this Life, and in ano-  
ther Life shall be done away, at the Ap-  
pearing

SERM. appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

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*Christ; who shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able even to subdue all Things to himself.* But the Distempers and Diseases of the Soul, if not timely cured, will last as long as the Soul it self; and will stick by it in another Life, and make it miserable to all Eternity. They have a permanent Effect, and will endure as long as the Subject in which they inhere subsists; and that is for ever. For though the Separation of the Soul from the Body, necessarily destroys the Texture of the Body, we have no Reason to imagine that it will destroy the Frame and Temper of the Soul, or make any Alteration in it. As That survives the Body; and subsists without it, so it will still retain the same Qualities and Dispositions, whether good or bad, which it went off with, at its Separation from the Body; and will accordingly be happy or miserable for ever. This seems to be more than intimated in that remarkable Place, Rev. 22. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: And he which is filthy,*

let

*let him be filthy still: And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: And he that is holy, let him be holy still.* For

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For this we see will be the Case, and is no other than the natural Effect and Consequence of a virtuous and a vicious Course of Life. So that unless God, to the unspeakable Loss of his Creatures; should pull down what they; by many painful and repeated Acts of Virtue, had built up; which is inconsistent both with his Justice and his Goodness: or should change Men on a suddain from great Sinners to Saints, and against their Wills root out their vicious Habits, and infuse virtuous ones in their Room; which seems inconsistent with his Purity and Holiness: Men will certainly find themselves in another World, much in the same State and Condition wherein they left this; and will be happy or miserable accordingly.

THE Use I would make of what has been said concerning these Distempers and Diseases of the Soul, is to correct the false Notions which Men have of the Happiness and Misery of another World.



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MANY People consider Heaven as a glorious Place, abounding with all manner of Pleasures and Enjoyments; and that if they could but once be admitted there, nothing more would be wanting to compleat their Happiness. And they look upon Hell, as a Place of Pain and Torment, which God by his arbitrary Power thrusts Men into, when he might as well let all be happy without any Difference or Distinction. But from what has been said, it appears; that Heaven and Hell should rather be considered as two opposite States, which Men bring themselves into, by the contrary Practice of Virtue and Vice; that they are the proper Result and genuine Fruits of those good or ill Habits which Men contract in this World by a holy or a wicked Conversation.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is within us; it must be begun in this World, and we must grow up into it by Degrees, by the constant Practice of all heavenly Graces and Virtues. We must not stand gazing abroad, expecting it from the Clouds, and that it should come into us from without; but

but we must look for the Beginnings of it SERMON  
to arise within us, from our own Hearts, VII.  
from a virtuous Frame and Temper of  
Mind; without which, where-ever or  
what-ever it is, we shall be never the  
happier for it.

And we have dreadful Apprehensions  
of the Flames of Hell without us; we are  
afraid and tremble when we hear of Fire  
and Brimstone; whilst in the mean Time,  
we securely nourish in our own Hearts a true  
and living Hell, and feed and cherish with-  
in us the Worm that never dies, and the  
Fire that cannot be quench'd. The dark  
Fire of our blind Lusts and Passions, con-  
sumes our Bowels within; Pride, Envy,  
Malice, Hatred, and Revenge, do, in the  
most miserable manner, burn and scorch  
our Souls; and though we cannot but feel  
it, we are not at all concern'd at it, and  
take no Care to prevent it. But alas! we  
little think where this will end; We little  
think how fast Hell steals upon us una-  
wares, while we live here indulging our  
sinful Lusts and Passions, and that there  
wants nothing but Death to drop us irre-  
trievably into it.

To conclude: We may depend upon it, as a most certain Truth, That the Foundation both of Heaven and Hell is laid within us, in the inward Frame, and Temper, and Disposition of our Souls. So that if we would escape the Torments of the one, and enjoy the Happiness of the other, we must apply our selves to the great Work of inward Reformation and Amendment; we must discharge our Souls of every hateful and baneful Quality; heal them of all their Diseases and Distempers, and set every Thing strait within us; make clean our Hearts, and renew a right Spirit, a Spirit of true Piety and Virtue, of universal Love and good Will. So shall we be out of the Reach of that wicked one, and Hell it self will have no Power over us; But being already in the heavenly State, when we go hence, we shall naturally go to that Place as to our proper Home, where we shall readily be received into the Joy of our Lord, and be admitted to partake of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.





## The Cure of the Diseases of the Soul.



PSAL. xli. 4.

*I said, Lord, be merciful  
unto me; heal my Soul,  
for I have sinned against  
thee.*



**A**MONGST other Representations which the Scripture makes of Sin, in order to deter Men from it, by convincing them of the dangerous Nature, and deadly Consequences of it; we find it there frequently describ'd to us under the Name and Notion of a Dis-

**Ser. VIII.** Member and a Disease; and great, and notorious, and habitual Sinners are set forth as Persons dangerously sick, and who greatly want to be cur'd. And when by the Grace of God, in concurrence with their own Endeavours, they repent and forsake their Sins; they are said to be healed. Thus *Jer. 17. 14. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for thou art my Praise.* And *Hos. 14. 4. I will heal their Backslidings.* Upon which one of the Jewish Writers (*Aben Ezra*) thus comments; *Backsliding, or Rebellion in the Soul, is as Sickness in the Body; and therefore the Word healing, drusht, in Opposition to being smitten, thapah, ver. 16.* Thus *Isaiah* speaking of the obstinate and impenitent *Jews*, ch. 6. ver. 10. (which Passage is quoted by our Saviour, *Matt. 13. 15.* and *Mark 4. 11.*) says; *lest they should be converted, and I should heal them.*

We meet with the same Representation of this Matter in the New Testament. Our Saviour is describ'd as the great Physician of Souls, and all Sinners as his Patients. The Prophet *Malacchi*, prophesying

ing of his Coming, thus expresses himself; **SERMON VIII.**  
*But unto you that fear my Name, the Spirit of Righteousness shall arise with Healing in his Wings;* ch. 4. ver. 2. And we are said to be *healed by his Stripes*, Isaiah 53. 5. 1 Pet. 2. 24. And he thus speaks of himself, and the End of his coming; *They that are whole, have no need of the Physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, Mark 2. 17.

FROM these and many other Places which might be alledg'd, 'tis evident that the Scripture represents Sin as the Disease and Sickneſs of the Soul. And accordingly, in my last Discourse, I propos'd to consider Sin under this very Notion or Similitude, and to treat of it in this manner.

- I. To lay before you a brief View of the Distempers and Diseases of the Soul,
- II. To show the great Danger of these Distempers, And,
- III. To direct you to the proper Methods of curing them.



THE two first of these Heads, I have already discoursed upon. I come now in the

III. Place, To direct you to the *proper Methods* of curing these Distempers and Diseases of the Mind.

'Tis with the Distempers of the Mind as with those of the Body; the sooner they are taken to task, the sooner and more certain will be the Cure. A slight Indisposition, or the Beginning of any bodily Distemper, is easily removed; but if we suffer it to grow into a confirmed Disease, or a settled ill Habit, the Case is then more dangerous, and the Cure more dubious.

BESIDES this, the Diseases and Infirmities of the Body are more easily cur'd when we are young, than when we are grown old, and become stricken in Years; and some there are, which, if let alone 'till such a Period of Life, 'tis impossible perfectly to cure. All which does in a great Measure hold true of the Distempers of the Mind. And therefore as none of these Considerations and Circumstances,

neither the Inveterateness of the Distemper, nor the Age of the Patient, discourage Men from attempting the Cure of any of their bodily Ailments; so neither should they hinder us from attempting the Care and Cure of our Minds. Men never think it too late to endeavour to recover the Health and Strength of their Bodies; they are loath at any Time to give them over for lost; and neither the Nature nor Number of their Distempers will deter them from trying for some Relief. If they cannot cure all their bodily Ills, they will get clear of as many as they can. And where they cannot compleat the Cure, and restore themselves to perfect Health and Soundness; they will, however, do what they can towards it. If they cannot entirely root out the Distemper, they will endeavour to stop the Progress of it, and abate its Force. Where they cannot remove an Evil, they will arm against it, and prevent the ill Consequences of it, as far as they are able; and when they cannot get thoroughly well, and free themselves from all Pain and Sicknefs, they will get as well as they can, and make the Re-

mainder

SERMON  
VIII.

remainder of their Lives as easy as 'tis possible under their present Circumstances; and this they think to be richly worth all their Care and Pains.

Thus do Men behave themselves towards their Bodies, and thus should we act in the Cure of our Souls. If we cannot subdue all our Passions, and conquer all our vicious Habits and Inclinations, let us get the Mastery of as many as we can; if we have suffered any to grow too strong to be perfectly overcome, let us oppose them however as much as is in our Power. If we cannot overcome them, let us keep our selves from being overcome by them: If we cannot take away all their Strength, let us weaken it; and if we cannot do that, let us hinder them from growing any stronger. If we have already lost too much Time, and let our Distempers gain upon us; let us loose no more, but begin immediately upon the Cure. Though we are sick, let us not be sick unto Death; and though we are grown old in Sin and Wickedness, let us take Care not to die in it.

THERE



## Diseases of the Soul.

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THERE SERM.  
is no Time of Life wherein  
something of this Kind may not be done  
for our Benefit; nor any Case which we  
can put, so hard, but that it will admit of  
some Relief. And if Men will not despise  
any the least Help and Assistance in any  
of those Ills which happen to the Body,  
we ought thankfully to embrace any  
Thing of this Kind in a Case of so much  
greater Concern and higher Consequence.  
If Men will be at any Pains or  
Cost for the Preservation of these perish-  
ing Bodies, and keeping them free from  
Pain and Sickness and Hurt of every  
Kind, during this short and uncertain  
Life: Shall we think any Pains too great  
which will turn to the Good of our Souls,  
which will secure and encrease their  
eternal Happiness, and prevent or lessen  
their eternal Misery? With what La-  
bour and Industry do we see Men daily  
endeavouring after some little inconsidera-  
ble Qualifications, which will recommend  
them to others, and raise them in the  
World? and shall not we be as industrious  
to gain those Qualifications which are of  
undoubted Worth, and will make us for e-  
ver?

SERM. ver 2 If Men think it worth their while,  
 VIII. and a commendable Undertaking, to be  
 Masters of any Art or Science, and will  
 enter late upon these Studies; shall we  
 think any Thing too much to be done to  
 attain the Art of living well, or any Time  
 of Life, too late to begin the Study of  
 Wisdom and Virtue?

THE Rules which I would prescribe for  
 this Purpose, are these.

I. To begin this Work *betimes*. To  
 accustom our selves early to govern our  
 Passions, and to bring them under Subje-  
 ction to our Reason. To give that which  
 is the governing Part in us, the first  
 Possession of us; and to let the Reason of  
 our Minds have the Rule over our inferior  
 Appetites and Passions. By this Means  
 we shall give a right Turn to our Minds  
 at first, and early acquire good and vir-  
 tuous Dispositions, and so shall no Wick-  
 edness ever afterwards have Dominion o-  
 ver us. Thus we may, in a great mea-  
 sure, prevent these Diseases and Distem-  
 pers of our Minds, and keep our selves  
 well; or whenever they come upon us,  
 and we find our selves sick, if we take  
 our

our selves to task in that Instant, the SERM.  
Cure will be both speedy and easy. For VIII.  
as long as our good Dispositions are  
strongest, and have the upper hand, they  
will soon master and over-come any ill  
ones, which may at any Time, upon any  
Occasion, arise within us.

MUCH indeed of this depends upon  
those who have the Care of our first and  
younger Years, when our Passions are  
tender and pliable, and may easily be  
commanded and directed aright. But  
whether they have been negligent of us,  
or not ; we must afterwards take Care of  
our selves.

THUS we act with Regard to our Bo-  
dies. If through the Negligence of those  
who should have taken Care of us, we  
have contracted any Infirmary, or Weak-  
ness, or ill Habit of Body ; as soon as we  
come to Years of Discretion, and are sen-  
sible of our Misfortune, we immediately  
look out for a Cure, and never rest till  
we have done all we can to make our  
selves whole.

AND thus we should act with regard to  
our Minds or Souls. If when we come  
to



**SERM.** to the Use of our Reason, and can distinguish between Good and Evil, we find them out of order, labouring under manifest and manifold Distempers and Diseases; if we find our Understandings dark and cloudy, our Wills crooked and perverse, and our Passions and Affections irregular and disorderly, all which are evident Tokens of inward Sickness and Weakness; we must immediately apply ourselves to the Healing of these Distempers and Diseases, and look out for proper Remedies and Cures.

Those Disorders of the Mind which arise from bodily Constitution and Complexion, we must redress by Applications to the Body, *i. e.* we must cure those Vices which are properly from the Body, by keeping under the Body, and bringing it to Subjection; by withdrawing the Fuel that kindles those Fires, and feeds those Lusts within us; by retrenching our Meat, and Drink, and Recreations; by inuring our selves to Abstinence and Self-denial, and living in a constant Course of Temperance and Moderation.

As to those Distempers of the Mind SERM.  
which the Body has no Share in, but VIII.  
spring from the Mind it self; they must be  
cured by the Reason of our Minds, by  
proper Considerations and Reflections. We  
must give our selves up to the Conduct of  
our Reason; and study all the ways we  
can, to cultivate and improve it. We must  
let That direct us in the Choice of our  
Actions; and whenever we are prompted  
to any Thing by present Profit or Pleasure,  
by any inordinate Lust or Passion, we must  
hearken to what our Reason bids us to do,  
and not venture upon any Action, 'till we  
have brought it to that Tryal. If we ac-  
custom our selves to this, we may always  
keep our Passions under; or if at any  
Time they should make head against us,  
they will not be able to hurry us on to  
any great Excess, 'till Reason interposes, and  
then it will be out of their Power.

2. WHERE by long indulging the Bo-  
dy and neglecting the Mind, Passion has  
got the upper Hand of our Reason, and  
the Diseases of the Soul are grown strong  
and stubborn; where Pride and Anger,  
Covetousness and Ambition, Malice,

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Envy, Hatred, and the like; where any of these, I say, have taken deep Root in us, and have got the Ascendant over us, so as to transport us to outrageous Excesses; the Case is dangerous indeed, but not desperate; and the Cure, though it be difficult, yet 'tis not impossible. It must be done by Degrees, by much Care, and Labor, and Watchfulness; with much Patience, Constancy, and Resolution; by the Use of fit Means and Methods, and the Application of proper Motives and Considerations.

I. WE must do what we can, to avoid the Occasion of these Passions. If they have been rais'd in us by allowing our selves too freely in any particular Diversion, by conversing too much with such or such Companions, by too eagerly following any sort of Calling or Employment, or adventuring too far in the Pursuit of Gain and Profit; whatever of this Kind (for 'tis impossible to enumerate all the Instances) has been the Occasion of breeding and nourishing these Passions in us, must carefully be avoided, and we must keep from them at as great a Distance as we



we can. For the Advice which *Solomon* SERM.  
gives in one Particular, will be found of VIII.  
excellent Use in every one of these; Re-  
move thy Way from her, and come not  
nigh the Door of her House, Prov. 5. 8.

We must avoid these Things, as we would  
the Plague, or any infectious Distemper;  
since if we come near them, and converse  
too familiarly with them, we know by  
sad Experience, that they will breed in  
us some Disease or other, *i. e.* blow us  
into some Excess of Passion and Folly,  
and make us sick and out of Order. And  
therefore where-ever any of these Things  
cannot be wholly avoided, we must be  
upon our Guard, cautious and circum-  
spect, and not take too great Liberties  
with them.

2. WHERE we find any of these Passi-  
ons coming upon us, we must immediate-  
ly oppose them, stifle them in their Birth,  
suppress the first Risings of them within  
us, and keep them under. What *St.*  
*James* says of not restraining our Tongue  
from flying out into uncharitable and abu-  
sive Expressions, *Behold how great a Mat-  
ter a little Fire kindleth!* is true of letting

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*loose any Passion ; it will become like a Spark amongst combustible Matter, and blow up, and consume all before it. Jam.*

3. 5.

AND as we may easily extinguish a Spark ; but if we suffer it to grow into a Flame, we shall find it difficult, and many Times impossible to master it, and we our selves may perish in it : So we may easily stifle our Passions, when we first feel them glowing in our Breasts ; but if we suffer them to burst out into a Fire, they will destroy every Thing about them, and we our selves shall be consum'd in the Flames. If we take them when they first begin to stir, we may easily subdue them ; but if we suffer them to rise to any Height, they will soon grow strong and boisterous, they will transport and hurry our Minds, as a Hurrican does our Bodies, and not leave us at Liberty to think and choose for our selves.

THIS is the Ground and Meaning of that Advice which the Apostle gives us, *Rom. 12. 19. Avenge not your selves, but rather give Place unto Wrath : We must give Place, and not excite the Furiousness of*

of our own Wrath ; *i. e.* we must recede SERM. VIII.  
and give back, when-ever that would  
push us forward ; so as not to act what-  
ever it shall prompt us to. 

THIS too is the Reason and the true Import of that Caution which we meet with, *Eph. 4. 26. Be ye angry, and sin not ; i. e.* take heed, and beware of sinful Anger : Or, indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin. For such is the Nature of that Passion more especially, so fierce and unruly, that our only Security will be to suppress it at first, unless upon very great and just Occasions ; and even there we must keep a strict Hand over it, to restrain it within due Bounds.

3. WHERE we cannot keep our Passions under, nor hinder them from dethroning our Reason, when they rise up against us ; which, for want of Self-government, is too often the Case ; we may, at least, confine them within our selves, and keep them in our own Breasts, and not expose our selves to Reproach and Contempt by foolish and extravagant Words and Actions. Let our Passion be never so great, we must keep our Hands from Blows, and our Tongues from foul and abusive Language. If we find our selves strongly provok'd to this, we must give Place to Wrath, withdraw 'till the Heat and Fury of our Passion is abated ; and never let it be seen or said of us, that we are like *Solomon's* Mad-  
man,



SERM. man, who scattereth Fire-brands, Ar-  
 VIII. rows, and Death; and saith, *Am I not*  
 ~~~~~ *in Sport?*

It will be no Excuse to say afterwards, I was transported with Passion, and could not help what I did. For we might, and ought to have help'd it. And if we would but govern our Passions so far as to keep them within the Bounds of outward Decorum, and common Decency; we might, by Degrees, carry the Matter much further, subdue them within us, and subject them to the Reason of our own Minds. But this is the Place where they, who are exceedingly addicted to Passion, should begin to stop; I mean, at any outward indecent Expressions of it. If we do not this, we shall be unable to set any Bounds to it afterwards. If we once give Way to angry Words or Blows; if we let our Passion make any such mad Sallies as these; we cannot say, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further, and here shall thy Rage stop.* It will soon get out of our Reach and Call; and therefore 'tis much better (as I said) within us, to stifle it in our own Breasts; and be bold, it will not burst us.

THE Presence of others, especially of those whose good Opinion we value and esteem, will help us to keep our Passions within these Bounds. We shall be ashamed that any such should see us in these Dis-

Disguises. This is a Transgression of the **SERM.**
 Laws of good Breeding. 'Tis shocking **VIII.**
 and offensive to others, and a Scandal and
 Disgrace to our selves. And I doubt not,
 but many have been withheld from such
 Outrages, by such Considerations as these.
 And how much this is in every one's
 Power, by making Resolutions to him-
 self, such as he may keep; is easy for eve-
 ry one to try. Nor let any one say, he
 cannot govern his Passions, nor hinder
 them from breaking out, and carrying
 him into Action; for what he can do be-
 fore a Prince, or a great Man, he can do
 alone, or in the Presence of God, if he
 will. And therefore I would prescribe it
 in the

4. Place, as an excellent Remedy a-
 gainst the Excess of Passion of any Kind,
 evermore to reverence our selves, and the
 Dignity of our own Natures; and this
 will make us ashamed of acting so unbe-
 coming a Part, and so unworthy of our-
 selves, as we do every time we give
 way to our Passions, and are overcome
 by them.

THAT Memento or Admonition which
 a great and powerful Emperour ordered
 every Morning to be sounded in his Ears,
 to keep him from abusing his Greatness
 and Power to the Hurt and Prejudice of
 others, *That he was a mortal Man,*
 will, in a different Sense, serve to re-

SERM. strain us from the furious Effects of our
 VIII. Passions. We are not only mortal, and
 must die, and give an Account of our Behaviour here; but while we live, and as we are Men, we are above these Things; and we strangely lessen, and degrade, and forget our selves, when-ever we submit to them.

THIS will be very evident if we consider our Frame and Make, that besides those Appetites and Passions which we have in common with the Creatures below us, we have Reason and Understanding, which are superior to any of their Faculties, and which distinguish us from them, and set us above them. And herein the great Dignity, as well as the principal Duty of Man consists; in keeping his Passions subject to Reason, and in governing his Appetites by that Understanding wherewith God has distinguish'd him from, and dignify'd him above the inferior Creation. In all other Things we are excelled by the Creatures below us; and if in the Use and Exercise of our Reason we do not excel them, we sink our selves beneath them. If we suffer our Passions to hurry us on to Things exorbitant, and unreasonable; we are worse than the Beasts that perish. Here then the Advice of the wise Son of *Sirach* will be very seasonable, *My Son, glorify thy Soul in Meekness, and give it Honour*
 at-

according to the Dignity thereof. Who will justify him that sinneth against his own Soul? and who will honour him that dishonoureth his own Life? Ecclus. 10. 28, 29. SERM. 2
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WE justly esteem it a base Thing to part with that Liberty which human Laws have invested us with, and tamely to give up any of the Privileges or Immunities, which we enjoy as Members of civil Society; These are Things which we set such a value upon, that we think nothing too much to be done to secure them to us: How much more highly therefore ought we to esteem, and stedfastly adhere to that Liberty which Nature it self has given us, and those Rights and Privileges which by the Laws of our Creation we are invested with, and God himself bestow'd upon us, the Moment we were made? And how much more base and unbecoming is it, to suffer our selves to be tyranniz'd over by unruly and unreasonable Passions, and enslav'd by the servile Desires of Wealth, Honour, Pleasure, and the like?

THE good Things of this Life were given us for our Use and Benefit, and we may freely use them for our Good. We may serve our selves of them, but we must not serve them, nor let them be our Masters; but must stand fast in that Liberty wherewith God has made us free;

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acquit our selves like Men, and not suffer our selves to be entangled with any Yoke of Bondage to these poor and low Enjoyments. This was the Resolution and the Practice of the great Apostle. *All Things are lawful unto me,* (says he, speaking of indifferent Things) *but all Things are not expedient, or profitable. All Things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the Power of any,* 1 Cor. 6. 12. He was resolv'd, and it was a noble Resolution, and an Argument of a great and generous Spirit, that no sensual Sovereignty or worldly Authority should be over his Mind; that he would not so far indulge his Appetites or Passions in any Kind, as to bring himself into a disadvantageous State of Slavery and Subjection.

3. THE last Thing I shall recommend to you, for the Regulation of your Passions, and restraining them from hurting or destroying the Soul; is, to make the Reason of Things the Rule of our Actions, the Standard and Measure of all our Appetites and Desires of these external Possessions.

FOR, upon Examination, we shall find that Insatiableness, Greediness, a general Covetousness, immoderate Desire, and excessive Appetite, or whatever else you will call it, (for the Thing it self is sufficiently known by any of these Names) is the Root of all these Distempers and Dis-

Diseases of the Mind, which we have been speaking of: From hence comes Pride, Covetousness, Ambition, and all those other Passions which prey upon the Soul, and so much harass and discompose us.

SERIE
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AN Instance or two will make this very evident.

FOR what is it that betrays us into Covetousness, or an immoderate Desire of Riches, but Insatiableness as to these outward Things? We set no Bounds to our Appetites, and never think we have enough, and therefore nothing can satisfy us. We do not make the Nature and Reason of Things the Measure and Standard of our Desires: If we did this, we should soon see an End of them. For, the supplying our selves with the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life, being the only real and true Use of Riches; when we have attained to this, we should put a Stop to all farther Pursuits of this Kind. And this is not difficult to be attain'd. For Nature has not made very many Things necessary to this End; nor is a great Estate an essential Ingredient of a happy and a comfortable Life. But Men do not make this the Measure and Standard of their Desire of Riches. They are not content with those Things which Nature has made necessary, and the Reason of Things requires; but they must have

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have what-ever Custom calls for; they must wallow in Plenty, and indulge in Sloath and Luxury; they must have their Pride and Vanity gratify'd, and cannot bear to come behind any in Wealth and Grandeur: So that there is no End of their Covetousness; and such People are never satisfy'd, and will never own that they have enough. This is truly, in the Words of the wise Man, *an evil Disease*. Eccles. 6. 2. *He that thus loveth Silver, (without any Regard to the true End and real Use of it) shall not be satisfy'd with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance, with Encrease. This is also Vanity*, chap. 5. ver. 10.

THE Case is the same with Regard to Pride, Ambition, and Vain-glory. These all arise from the same Source, and spring from an insatiable Thirst of Praise, Esteem, and Applause; from a Desire of more of these Things than are necessary, or will serve any good End or Purpose. 'Tis just the same Thing as Covetousness is, with Respect to Money; and altogether as unreasonable. For we may as well desire to have the Wealth and Possessions of all Men, as their good Word, Opinion, and Esteem. 'Tis indeed a very just and reasonable Desire to be well thought and well spoken of, by those amongst whom we live and converse, to whom we bear any Relation, or upon whom we have a-

ny Dependance. This is necessary to the SERM.
VIII
Peace and Quiet, and Comfort of our
Lives. 'Tis the proper Reward of Vir-
tue, and what we shall scarcely miss of, if
we take virtuous Courses.

BUT to affect to be known and com-
mended by all, and to become the gene-
ral Subject of Mens Talk and Admiration,
and to draw their Eyes and Observation
upon us; is excessive Vanity, and another
evil Disease. 'Tis wretched Slavery, and
must necessarily be attended with perpetual
Sollicitude and Vexation of Spirit. If we
could compass it, it is of no real Use and
Benefit; but That is hardly possible to be
done by fair and honourable Methods.
For considering what the Majority ever
was and will be made up of, 'tis not dif-
ficult to guess what must be done to gain
their good Word and Opinion. Hence it
is that our Saviour thus speaks to his Dis-
ciples, *Luke 6. 26. Wo unto you, when
all Men shall speak well of you: For so
did their Fathers to the false Prophets.*

WHAT has been said of Covetousness
and Vain-glory, equally holds true of In-
temperance, Sensuality, Wrath, Envy,
&c. These are all of them Excesses
in their several Kinds, and all the Danger
and Mischief of them consists in their o-
ver-shooting the Mark.

AND therefore the most effectual Way
of preventing or curing these Distempers
and

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and Diseases of the Mind, is to govern our selves by Nature and Reason, and by the true End and Use of the Things which we are in Pursuit of. 'Tis absolutely necessary that we should set some Bounds to our Desires, and reduce them to some Standard and Measure; otherwise they will wander without End, and never suffer us to be at Rest. And what Bounds can be so proper, as those which Nature it self has fixt? What Measure so fit for rational Creatures to observe, as the Reason of Things? This would keep us from all Excess of Appetite, and Inordinacy of Desire; from coveting more of any of these Things than we want, and from setting too great a Value upon those which we already have. This would exclude all immoderate Grief, Joy, Hope, Fear, Anger, Envy, and the like. This would establish the Health and Peace of our Minds, make us possess our Souls in Patience under every State and Condition, prove the best Security against the Evils and Troubles of this Life, and lay the firmest Foundation for our Happiness in the next.

THESE are some of those Remedies I would prescribe against the Distempers and Diseases of our Minds; And if we would apply them with as much Diligence and Care as we use in the Case of any bodily Sicknes or Infirmitie, I doubt not
but

but we should reap the Benefit of it. If ~~Sermon~~ we could not compleat the Cure, and **VIII** make our selves perfectly whole; we might at least mend our selves, and be much better than we are.

BUT in order to this, there will (as I said) be Occasion for much Steadiness and Resolution, Patience and Perseverance. Without this, nothing which is difficult can be compass'd; and such we must own the present Case to be. By the constant and daily Practice of these and such like Rules, we may in Time, and by Degrees, get the better of our Passions, and heal the Distempers and Disorders of our Minds. I say, in Time, and by Degrees; For as this Sickness did not seize us all at once and on a suddain, but came upon us by leisurely Steps, and grew up to this Height by Degrees; so neither can we expect to be cured of it in an Instant. But if we labour and take Pains in this Work, we may carry it on Step by Step, and at last accomplish it. For tho' we should not presently be much better, yet if after a Years Study and Practice, we find our selves something better, tho' it be but a little; this is sufficient Encouragement. For if we persist in our Purpose, and continue our Care and Pains the next Year, our Improvement will be greater than it was the last. In all these Cases, the greatest Difficulty is always at the first; and

SERM. and if we can but stop the Distemper, or
VIII. give a Turn to it, which requires nothing
 but a good Resolution, we shall soon find
 our selves on the mending Hand; and the
 further we go on, the Work will go so
 much the easier off; and every Year we
 shall make greater Advances in it than
 other; And thus we may at last perfect the
 Cure: Or if we cannot do that, we shall,
 however, prevent many of those bad Con-
 sequences which would follow from a total
 Neglect of our Souls, and mitigate others,
 and make our last State better than our
 first.

WHOEVER considers what has been
 said concerning the dangerous Nature of
 these Distempers of the Mind, above those
 of the Body, the dismal Effects which vi-
 cious Habits and Dispositions will have
 upon the Soul in a future State; cannot
 but think himself highly concern'd to pre-
 vent or cure them. Natural Diseases af-
 fect only the outward Man; they can but
 kill the Body, and after that have no more
 which they can do. But moral Diseases, vi-
 cious Indispositions, go much further, and
 enter much deeper into us; They too can
 kill the Body, and, after that, destroy both
 Body and Soul in Hell.

ROM;

R O M. viii. 18.

For I reckon, that the Sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us.



THESE Words, tho' spoken SERM.
 at first with regard to a State IX.
 of Persecution, and intended
 to comfort and support the
 new Converts under it; may
 fitly be understood of the general Condi-
 tion of Christians; and of the Difficulties
 which the Practice of their Religion brings
 upon them in the common and ordinary
 Course of Things.

SERM. FOR if the Apostle could say of *those*
 IX. *Days* wherein Christians were surrounded
 with Heathen Enemies, and had the Civil
 Powers arm'd against them, and were not
 only subject to, but actually underwent the
 cruellest Persecutions; If the Apostle
 could say, that He reckon'd the Sufferings
 of *those Times* not worthy to be compar'd
 with the Glory which should be reveal'd;
 and if This was a sufficient Comfort and
 Support to Christians under those Suffer-
 ings: How much stronger will this hold
 of the *common Lot* of Christians, of the
 Difficulties and Duties which are *ordina-*
rily incumbent on us? These are not
 worthy to be compar'd, nor so much as to
 be mention'd with the Glory which shall
 be reveal'd: They are as Nothing in Com-
 parison, and hold no manner of Proportion
 with it. And if the Greatness of that
 Recompence of Reward which remains
 for the Righteous in another Life, was
 sufficient to bear up and animate the first
 Christians in those Times of great Trou-
 bles, and severe Tryals; how much more
 forcible ought it to be, to put Us upon the
 vigorous Practice of the *common and ordi-*
nary Duties of our Religion in these Days

of Peace and Quiet? If They did not think it hard to submit to the cruellest Treatment, and to lay down their Lives, when God call'd them to bear Testimony to his Truth; how much less reason have We to complain, or to think any thing hard or unreasonable which our Religion requires of us, in order to our Acceptance with G O D? The Advantage is visibly on Our side: And if the Apostle could say of his own Case, and that of other Christians, that he reckon'd the Sufferings of *those Times* not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which should be reveal'd: with how much more reason may We say the same thing of our selves; and reckon all that G O D has required of us, all the Difficulties and Hardships, the Commands and Prohibitions which G O D has laid upon us in his Gospel, not to be compar'd with the Reward he has promis'd and provided for us?

THIS is what I shall understand at present by *Sufferings*; all those Things which Christianity does *ordinarily* require of us, and has made the necessary and indispensable Terms of Salvation. And the Apostle's Argument holds much stronger of these,

SERM. than of the Sufferings of the Primitive

IX. Times, that they are not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which shall be reveal'd.

So that I shall make it my present Business to vindicate the Goodness of GOD in the Gospel-Terms of Salvation; and to shew the great Unreasonableness of those Men, who think these Terms hard, or refuse to comply with them.

IN order to set this Argument in a clear light, it will be necessary,

I. To take a short View of Christianity, and those Things which it requires at our hands.

II. To Consider a little, and, as far as we are able, Contemplate the Greatness of that Glory which shall be reveal'd.

FROM whence we shall see,

III. How this Matter stands upon the Comparison; and how truly we may reckon, that the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which shall be revealed.

I. LET

I. LET us take a brief View of Chri- SERM.
 stianity, and those Things which it re- IX.
 quires at our hands.

NOW Christianity is plainly nothing else but a new and second Revelation of GOD's Will, founded upon that first Revelation which GOD made to us by the Light of Nature, by that Reason which he imparted to us at our Creation, which he set up in every Man's Breast, and which the *Wise Man* stiles *the Candle of the Lord*; it being that Light which was given us for our Direction, for the Ordering of our Goings, and the Government of our Lives and Actions. When this Light was obscur'd by the Fall of Man, and the Dimness of it encreas'd upon the Corruption which ensu'd; it pleas'd GOD, at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, to clear it up, and to make a new Revelation of his Will. This he did in some measure, when he spoke, in Times past, to the Fathers by his Prophets; and has compleatly done, in these last Days, when he spoke to us by his Son. In the Gospel of our Blessed SAVIOUR, and in the Doctrine of his Apostles, which are written and transmitted down to us

SERM. for our Instruction, He has fully made
 IX. known his Will, what He expects from
 us, and what we may expect from Him.
 This second Revelation of G O D's Will is agreeable to the first, and is only an Illustration and Improvement of the Law of Nature, with the Addition of some few positive Things, such as the two Sacraments, and going to G O D and making our Approaches to Him in the Name and through the Mediation of his Son J E S U S C H R I S T.

C H R I S T I A N I T Y does not abridge us of any of the innocent Pleasures, and lawful Enjoyments of Life; it only prohibits such Excesses in our Pleasures, such irregular and inordinate Enjoyments as are really in themselves prejudicial, a Mischief and a Punishment to all who indulge them.

I T allows us every thing which Nature, pure uncorrupted Nature, craves at our hands; and forbids us nothing but what, if we were wise, we should deny ourselves. In a word, Christianity calls our Actions to the Standard of Reason; and enjoins us to do that, which, in all respects, is best and fittest to be done; to
 behave

behave ourselves in every Case as becomes **SERM.**
 us, and is most for our Interest; and for- **IX.**
 bids the doing all such Things as are a
 perfect Shame and Reproach to our Na-
 ture, and tend to our present Misery and
 Disquiet. It furnishes us with the com-
 pleatest System of the best Rules and
 Precepts of Life, that Mankind was
 ever acquainted with; which recommend
 themselves to our best and purest Reason;
 which are apparently good in themselves,
 and good for us.

THIS is evident, and needs no Proof
 in those Instances of Duty, wherein Chri-
 stianity agrees with Natural Religion, and
 lays no other Burthen upon us but what
 was ever esteem'd necessary.

BUT Christianity being an Improvement
 of Natural Religion, and carrying our Duty
 higher than Men generally thought them-
 selves oblig'd to by the Light of Nature; let
 us consider some of those Instances which
 are more properly and purely Christian.

CHRISTIANITY forbids us to love the
 World, and the Things that are in the
 World: It commands us to wean our
 Affections from these external Objects,
 and use the good Things of this Life with

SERM. Indifferency and Resignation. Now considering the Uncertainty of these Worldly Things, 'tis good for a Man so to be ; 'tis good to maintain this Indifferency towards Things of such Uncertainty, to sit loose from this World's Goods which we may quickly lose, and must shortly leave. This will enable us to bear with Patience whatever the Providence of God may bring upon us, and keep us from sinking under the Calamities and Disappointments we meet with. Whereas if we give the Reins to our Affections, and suffer them to engage in an eager pursuit of these transient Things ; every Loss or Cross we meet with, (and many we must expect,) will wound us deeply, and pierce us through with many Sorrows.

WE are enjoind to bear an universal Good-will towards all Men ; to *rejoyce with them that rejoyce, and weep with them that weep* ; to be pleas'd at the Happiness, and griev'd at the Miseries and Misfortunes of others ; to love, not only our Friends, but our Enemies ; to forgive those who injure and provoke us, and to oblige them by all the kind Offices that are in our Power. And what is there in all this, which

which a wise Man would not chuse to do, SERM.
tho' the contrary were allow'd him? Does IX.
not this manifestly make for our own pre-
sent Peace and Quiet? This is the best way
of reconciling Men to us, who may ge-
nerally be melted down by Kindness, and
gentle Usage. However, we shall certainly
preserve the Repose of our own Minds, pos-
sess our Souls in Patience, and free them from
those troublesome and tormenting Passions
of Envy, Hatred, Malice and Revenge.

We are commanded to *deny our selves,*
to *take up our Cross*; by which, in the
common and ordinary Course of Things,
no more is meant, than the denying
the importunate Cravings of our Appetites,
despising present Pleasure and Pain, for
the sake of that which Reason bids us do;
mortifying our members which are on the
earth, crucifying the flesh, with the lusts and
affections thereof, and keeping all our infe-
riour Appetites and Passions in due Sub-
jection to our Reason.

THIS, in other words, is no more than
to live and act according to our Nature;
to have the Government of our selves in
our own hands; to let that be the Ruling
Principle in us, which is most fit to Rule,
and

SERM. and was made for this End, and which
IX. alone distinguishes us from Beasts. With-

out this mastery of our Selves, and command of our Passions; we are unfit for any serious Employment, incapable of doing any Good to others, or having any Peace in our selves.

WE are requir'd to be content with our State and Condition, whatever that be; to acquiesce in the Dispensations of Providence towards us; to believe That to be best and fittest for us, which is allotted us; to trust and confide in GOD, and to resign our selves up to His Disposal, and submit our own Will and Wisdom to His.

BUT there is nothing in this Article which we can complain of; on the contrary, it makes much for our Comfort and Satisfaction. For after we have done all we can to help our selves, after we have us'd all lawful Means which are in our power, (and this we are not forbidden, but commanded to do,) how must it ease and quiet our Minds, to consider that we are under the Divine Protection, and in much safer hands than our own. This will prepare us for all Events, and reconcile

cile us to every thing that befalls us, how-
ever disagreeable to Flesh and Blood.

SERM.

IX.

WE are commanded to do all the Good we can in the World ; to submit to every thing whereby we may be truly helpful and beneficial to others ; to feed the Hungry, and cloath the Naked ; to instruct the Ignorant, and reclaim the Sinner ; to comfort the Weak and Feeble, and awaken the Careless and Secure ; to relieve the Injur'd and Oppress'd, and restrain the Violence of the Oppressor. These and such-like Acts of Goodness are so highly grateful and agreeable in themselves, that they are their own Reward ; and a Man would not omit any Opportunities of this kind, tho' he had no other Recompence for his Trouble, but that inward Joy and secret Satisfaction which naturally springs up in our Minds upon all such Occasions as these. The Good which we do in the World, is always accompany'd with Pleasure and Delight, and leaves a sweet Relish and Remembrance behind it.

WE are enjoin'd the Study and Practice of Universal Piety and Virtue, to purify and cleanse our selves from all filthiness

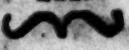
SERM. *things of flesh and spirit, and to perfect*

IX. *holiness in the fear of the Lord.* All

which, has a direct Tendency to promote our present Happiness; by Establishing such a Frame and Temper of Mind, such a right Spirit within us, as will be a firm Foundation of Happiness; and removing all the Grounds and Occasions of Misery and Disquiet. In pursuance of which,

WE are further to observe, that we are strictly prohibited all manner of Sin and Wickedness; not allow'd to harbour any bosom-Vice, or indulge any darling Lust; but to keep our selves pure, blameless and harmless as the Sons of God, as far as is consistent with our being the Sons of Men, with the Frailties and Imperfections of Human Nature. And whenever we fall into Sin, we are oblig'd immediately to repent of it, to ask God's Pardon for what we have done amiss, and both promise and perform better for the future.

THE necessity of all this towards our present Ease and Quiet, is very apparent. Guilt of Mind and Remorse of Conscience, are the natural Consequences of having done Wickedly: And no Man sins without

out wounding himself inwardly, and crea- **SERM.**
ting to himself Trouble and Anguish of **IX.**
Heart. Nor is there any Remedy for this, 
but Repentance: Without this inward
change of Mind, this godly Sorrow for
our Sins, we cannot forgive or be reconcil'd to our selves; much less can we hope for Forgiveness from God, without which we can never be at Peace with our selves.

So that Christianity, by strictly forbidding us all manner of Sin and Wickedness, and urging us to a speedy Repentance and Amendment of whatever we have done Amiss, has taken the most effectual Method to secure to us Peace of Mind, and Quiet of Conscience, and a Sense of God's Favour; without which, there can be no Enjoyment of ourselves, or any thing which we have. This is a brief and general View of the Nature of Christianity, and these are some of the chief and principal Duties which it enjoins.

Now 'tis evident that this Scheme is, in the main, agreeable to the Nature of Man, and the Reason of Things: Here is nothing in all this, but what, if not discoverable by the Light of Nature, is however approved by it, as tending to our
Happi-

SERM. Happiness and Perfection. Is it not there-

IX. fore highly fit and reasonable that we should govern our selves by this Scheme? And what Inducement would we have to do so, besides these Advantages which will accrue to us thereby? As to the Difficulties there may be in the Practice of some of these Rules, they are abundantly outweigh'd by the Conveniencies which we shall find in them. And the greatest Difficulties are those which arise from previous ill Habits which we have contracted, and which, upon our first entrance on a Christian Course, will give us some Disturbance: But these are Difficulties of our own making, and which cannot be plac'd to the Account of Religion. And whatever we suffer in this Contention and Struggle with our evil Habits, will be abundantly recompens'd by that Satisfaction and Contentment which we shall afterwards meet with in the ways of Piety and Virtue. This Violence which we offer ourselves in breaking off our vicious Customs, in *cutting off a right Hand*, and *plucking out a right Eye*, tho' for the present it seems not to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peace-
able

able fruit of righteousness unto them that **SERM.**
are exercised thereby. **IX.**

UPON the Whole therefore, if we set aside extraordinary Cases, such as our coming over from a loose and vicious Life to the strict Rules and pure Precepts of the Gospel; the taking up our Cross, in the strictest sense of that Phrase, and suffering Persecution: there is nothing in Christianity, but what is in it self very advantageous and inviting, and does in a great measure carry along with it its own Motives to embrace and practise it. Yet such is the Goodness of God, that he has been pleas'd to enforce it with further and brighter Motives, and has press'd us to the Observance of it by the most engaging and almost irresistible Arguments. For the Proof of which, let us, in the *Second Place*, consider a little, and, as far as we are able, Contemplate the Greatness of that Glory which shall be reveal'd.

II. *St. Paul* speaks of this Glory here, as what needs to be reveal'd, to give us a right Conception of it. For, as *St. John* tells us, it does not yet appear what we shall be; and it is impossible to have a full and clear Comprehension of our fu-

ture

SERM. ture Happiness, 'till we come to taste

IX. it, and be in Possession of it. 'Tis very
 observable, how the Apostle labours for
 Words to express it, in a Place parallel to
 the Text, 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18. *For our light
 Affliction, which is but for a Moment, work-
 eth for us a far more exceeding and eternal
 weight of Glory; while we look not at the
 Things which are seen; but at the Things
 which are not seen: for the Things which
 are seen, are Temporal; but the Things
 which are not seen, are Eternal.*

Two Things however may be depend-
 ed on, in this Matter: 1. The Certainty
 of this Glory. 2. The Greatness of it.
 1st. THIS Glory is certain, and what
 we shall most assuredly be possess'd of.
 The Apostle indeed speaks of it as in
 Reversion; he stiles it *the Glory which
 shall be reveal'd*; there is no present Ap-
 pearance of it; it is not yet seen, nor
 does it fall under our Senses. This is the
 reason why for many have no Regard to
 it; and what they do not see, they do not
 at all believe. But we, says the Apostle,
 in the Place now cited, *look not at the
 Things which are seen, but at the Things
 which are not seen.* By which he inti-
 mates,

mates, that not only those Things are, which are seen; but that there are many Things, whose Existence we are certain of, tho' they are not seen. Thus, when he says in the Text, that *this Glory shall be reveal'd*; he denotes the Reality and Certainty of this Glory, by that Expression; For those things only are said to be reveal'd or discover'd, which had then a Being and Actual Existence, tho' they did not as then appear.

THE Apostle says further, that this Glory shall be *reveal'd in us*. That we shall not only be advanc'd to a State of Glory, but that this Glory shall shine forth in us, and be conspicuous to all that behold us, ev'n to those who have been our Enemies and Persecutors. Which will be great matter of Consolation to us; since they will be forc'd to own our Innocence, who before condemn'd us as Guilty; According to that of the Wise-Man, *Then shall the Righteous Man stand in great Boldness before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible Fear, and shall be amazed at the Strangeness of his Salvation,*

SERM. *tion, so far beyond all that they looked for.*
 IX. *And they repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves; This was he whom we had sometimes in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach. We Fools accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour; how is he number'd among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! Wisd. 5. 1, &c.*

THUS shall this Glory which is now invisible, be reveal'd in us, when we shall arise Incorruptible and Immortal, shall be chang'd from Dishonour to Glory, and from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3. 18.

THE Certainty of this State of Glory is evident from several Passages of Scripture, which assure us of our Reward in Heaven. Our Saviour tells us, That at the last Great Day, *the Righteous shall go into Life Eternal; That they shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father; That they shall die no more, but be like the Angels of God in Heaven.* His Apostles are full and frequent in asserting the same Truth, That God will render to every Man according to his Deeds: *To them who by patient Continuance in Well-doing,*

doing, seek for Honour, and Glory, and Im-
 mortality, Eternal Life; That they shall re-
 ceive a Crown of Righteousness that fadeth
 not away; and have a Building of God, a
 House not made with Hands, Eternal in the
 Heavens; That they shall see God, and be-
 hold his Glory, and live for ever in his
 Presence.

SERM.
IX.

2dly, NEXT to the Certainty of this
 Glory, let us consider the Greatness of
 it. Here indeed we must acknowledge
 our selves to be at a Loss; for tho' we
 may be certain of *those Things which are*
not seen, 'tis impossible we should be ac-
 quainted with them so far as to be able
 to form any just Conceptions of them.

BUT thus much we know of this fu-
 ture State of Glory, without knowing the
 Particulars wherein it consists; that it is
 every way Perfect and Complete, Infinite
 in Degree, and Eternal in Duration. The
 Apostle calls it an *exceeding and an eter-
 nal weight of Glory*. The full Meaning of
 which Expressions tho' we cannot com-
 prehend, yet we know they mean some-
 thing which is exceedingly to be desir'd
 to make us Happy, and which will make
 us exceedingly Happy when we obtain it.

SERM. The Apostle tells us, that the *Sufferings*
 IX. *of his time were not worthy to be compar'd*
 with it. And tho' a slight Reward may
 be enough to recompense the common and
 ordinary Difficulties which we meet with
 in our Duty, yet it must be something
 very considerable which shall recompense
 the severest *Sufferings*, the cruellest Perse-
 cutions and Death: *Skin for Skin, all that*
a Man has, will he give for his Life;
 and this whole World is too little to re-
 compensate the Loss. But we are told, the
Glory which shall be reveal'd, will not only
 recompense, but out-weigh every thing
 which we can suffer here; nay, that all
 the *Sufferings* we can undergo, are not
 worthy to be compar'd with it.

THE *Sufferings of this present time* are
 inflicted by weak and impotent Men; our
 future Reward is the Gift of Infinite Good-
 ness and Power. The Crosses we meet
 with here, are in these mean and earthly
 Things; the Crown which is reserv'd for
 us, is Heavenly. Our Miseries here, are
 short and light; (for if they be great, they
 cannot last long; if light, they are easily
 born;) our Happiness will be Infinite and
 Eternal. Our Enemies and Persecutors are
 in

in God's Hands, and under his Restraint; SERM.
and he will not suffer us to be tempted IX.
or afflicted beyond what we are able to

bear. But That Recompence of Reward which he designs us in another Life, is immensely great, and will have no Bounds or Limits set to it. Who then would not willingly and cheerfully submit to any Hardships and Sufferings, for the Sake of Christ and his Religion; since all that he can do or suffer, is not worthy to be compar'd with that *Glory which shall be reveal'd*. How contentedly and ev'n thankfully should we embrace any Terms and Conditions, if by any Means we might attain to the *Resurrection of the Just, and be numbred with the Saints in Glory Everlasting*.

BUT if we set aside these extraordinary Cases, and take Things as we generally find them; Who would not rejoyce at the Offer which Christianity makes us, of Living for ever, and being unspeakably Happy for ever in another World; for passing the short Time of our sojourning here in the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and living not according to the Lusts of the Flesh, but the Will of God? How wel-

SERM. come should all the Restraints be, which
 IX. Religion lays upon us; and how small a
 Matter should it seem to us, to do what-
 ever God has commanded us, when he
 has promised to recompense us with such
 a Reward as is infinitely beyond the most
 difficult Services we can perform? And
 This brings me to the *Third* Thing I pro-
 pos'd; which was,

III. To shew how this Matter stands
 upon the Comparison; and how truly the
 Apostle did, and much more We may reckon,
*that the Sufferings of this present time, are
 not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory
 which shall be reveal'd in us.*

We have seen already, that what we
 shall usually suffer in the common course
 of Things, by practising the Precepts, and
 adhering firmly to the Rules of our
 Religion, amounts to nothing, and does
 not deserve the name of *Suffering*; since
 there is nothing ordinarily incumbent on
 us, but what is both agreeable to our Rea-
 son, and conducive to our present Interest,
 To be Just and Merciful, Sober and Tem-
 perate, Pious and Devout, is, in other
 words, to be Easy and Happy, to enjoy
 ourselves, and pursue our own Good, And
 what

what Inducement do we want to this? **SERM.**
what Reward can we desire or expect for **IX.**

so doing? As we are Men, endu'd with Reason and Understanding, Freedom of Will and Liberty of Choice; we are oblig'd to govern our Passions, and bring them into Subjection to our Reason; to chuse the the Things that are most Excellent, and prefer the Innocence and Integrity of our Actions to all the Advantages we might reap from indirect Practices. We stand bound by all the Ties of Nature and Humanity, to do no Wrong or Violence to any, but to do all the Good we can to all Men, and to be Helpful and Beneficial to others according to our Power. There is something within us, which strongly inclines us to these and such-like Duties; and we find not only an inward Pleasure and Satisfaction, but many outward Benefits and Advantages in the Performance.

Now that God should annex such a great and glorious Reward to such easy delightful Duties as these, and which in a great measure carry their own Reward along with them; that he should thus recompense that which is nothing else but our reasonable Service, and which

SERM. we were oblig'd to before any positive

IX. Command, and without any Promise or Threatning; is such an amazing Instance of Love and Goodness, as should constrain us to a cheerful Submission to any Thing which he lays upon us.

SOME of his Commands may in some Instances, at some Times, and in some Cases, have their Difficulties, and be somewhat Grievous to Human Nature. To contend with the prevailing Customs and Examples we meet with in the World; to struggle with those Passions, which there are so many Objects and Occasions to excite in us; to wrestle not only against *Flesh and Blood*, but against *Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places*; to *withstand all these in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand*; will require much Vigour and Vigilance, and call forth all our Strength and Courage. But when we consider the Weapons which Christianity furnishes us with for this Warfare, *ev'n the whole Armour of God*, and that *exceeding and eternal weight of Glory* with which our Victory will be crown'd; we want no Assistance or Encouragement to pur-

pursue this Work; and we deal ungrate- SERM.
fully with God, and basely by ourselves, IX.
if upon any Difficulties we give out.

This Struggle and Contention, were it much sharper and longer than it usually is, is really light, and but little to be accounted of, when put into the Scale against that *Glory which shall be reveal'd*. And 'tis a perfect Shame and Reproach to us, and we are highly unjust to ourselves and false to our own Interest, if, when we have such a Prospect before us, such Proposals and Overtures made us, we think it much to forego a little present Pleasure, or endure a little present Pain, to obtain them. And this is all, which in the common and ordinary Course of Things is requir'd of us.

WHAT the Apostle says to the *Hebrews*, whom he is exhorting to Constancy and Perseverance in their Christian Course, (*chap. 12. 4.*) may truly be apply'd to us, *Ye have not yet resisted unto Blood, striving against Sin*. However it has far'd with Christians of other Times and Places, Things are not come to that Extremity with any of Us; nor have we undergone any of those Tryals, with which God has been

SERM. been pleas'd sometimes to exercise others.

IX.  Our Lot is fallen in quiet and peaceable Times; and the greatest Opposition we meet with in the Practice of our Religion, is from Within, from our own unruly Lusts and Passions, from the inordinate Appetites and vicious Inclinations of our own Minds. The contending with these, and subduing them, are all the Sufferings of this present Time: And 'tis a shame that these should ever stand in Competition with the *Glory that shall be reveal'd.*

COULD the Apostle say in those Times of Distress and Difficulty wherein he liv'd, *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword?* (for This was then the common Lot of Christians, as it is written, *For thy Sake are we kill'd all the Day long; we are accounted as Sheep for the slaughter.*) Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am perswaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able

to separate us from the Love of God, which **SERM.**
is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **IX.**

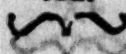
I say, If the Apostle could thus triumph over all these Difficulties; and was so fully perswaded and determined with himself, that nothing should separate him from the Love of Christ, not ev'n the most formidable Things to Human Nature; how shall we answer it, if we suffer every little, trifling, inconsiderable Difficulty, to interpose between us and Heaven, and deprive us of our future Reward?

ST. Paul reckon'd the greatest *Sufferings* that did or could possibly befall him, *not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which shall be reveal'd.* And we may as certainly reckon, that the *Sufferings* of this present Time, are not worthy to be compar'd with those of His. If He therefore thought he did so little, and suffer'd so little, in Comparison of his Reward; We must needs think, that all that we do, or suffer, amounts to nothing; and that the Practice of the common and standing Duties of our Religion, is really doing nothing, when we consider that Recompence of Reward which it will bring us.

FOR

SERM.

IX.



FOR practising a short time some Degrees of Abstinence and Self-denial, we shall meet with *Fulness of Joys and Pleasures for evermore*. For being faithful in a few Things, we shall be made Rulers over many Things; And for moderating our Affections towards the Things that are seen and are temporal, we shall be admitted to the full Possession and complete Enjoyment of those Things which are not seen, and are eternal.





J O B xxi. 15.

*What is the Almighty, that we
should serve him? and what
profit should we have, if we
pray unto him?*



S we are naturally weak and indigent Creatures, unable to
substist of ourselves, and in-
sufficient for our own Hap-
piness; being neither wise
enough for our own Direction, nor power-
ful enough for our own Defence, nor
good enough for our own Satisfaction:
for 'tis a mighty Privilege and an unspeak-
able Comfort to us, that we are allow'd
to have Recourse to God in Prayer, and
hold Communion with the Supream Dis-
poser of all Events, and Sovereign Gover-
nor of the World; to pour out our Souls
before

SERM.
X.

SERM. before Him, and disclose all our Grievs;
 X. to represent our Wants, and make our
 Complaints unto Him, and implore His
 Help and Assistance.

AND yet how do we slight and undervalue this Privilege; and what little use do we make of it? How loth are we to be brought to our Prayers; and with what little Zeal and Devotion do we perform this Duty; and how soon are we weary of it? and how ready are we to say with those wicked Ones, whom *Job* describes in the Text, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, &c?* It is therefore of great Concernment to us, to be well instructed in this great Duty; to understand the Nature of it, and our Obligations to it; to know the Grounds and Foundation upon which it is built; what reason we have to Pray to God; what Encouragement to hope for a favourable Return of our Prayers; how we may ask so as we shall have; seek so as to find; and knock that it may be open'd unto us; what Things we are to beg of God; at what Times we are to pray, and after what Manner, and in whose Name we are to offer up our Prayers to God.

THESE

THESE and many other Points it con- SERM.
cerns us to be fully resolv'd in; that we X.
may be convinced how much it is both
our Interest and our Duty to be frequent-
ly employ'd in Praying to God, and hold-
ing this Spiritual Communion with him.

I shall make it my Business, in some following Discourses, to enlarge upon this great Duty, and explain the principal Parts of it. In order to which, I shall *first* examine and answer Objections which are usually made against Prayer, and whereby Men think to excuse their Neglect of this Duty.

AND here I shall take Prayer, not in that general Sense wherein it is sometimes us'd, as including not only Prayers, but Praises too, and the whole of Religious Worship; but as it is restrain'd to that part of it, which is stil'd Petition, and which consists in begging good Things of God; in praying for those Mercies which we want, or against those Judgments which we fear.

AND here, I think, Prayer may properly be reckon'd amongst those Duties of Natural Religion, which Men, without the Light of Revelation, or any express
and

SERM. and positive Command, thought themselves
 X. oblig'd to, and in Fact did frequently
 practise.

PRAYER is directly grounded upon those Natural Notions which Men have of the Power and Providence of God. It flows immediately from those Conceptions which every Man frames to himself of the Divine Perfections ; from that Opinion which we have of God's Ability and Readiness to hear and help those who call upon him ; his Love to Piety and Virtue, and his Hatred of Sin and Wickedness ; his Willingness to countenance and protect the one, and discourage and punish the other. I say, all Prayer is grounded upon, and naturally springs from such Notions and Apprehensions of God as these.

IF there be a God, who is a Being of infinite Perfections ; who presides over and governs the World, and observes the Carriage and Behaviour of his Creatures ; who is a Rewarder of those that diligently seek and serve him, and a Punisher of those who neglect and disobey him : this is a sufficient Foundation for Prayer.

FOR

FOR what can be more Natural, SERM. X.
 than to apply our selves to Him who made us, for those Things which are necessary to our Support? *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?* And since God gave us freely Life and Being; we cannot doubt but he will, upon our earnest Prayers, give us whatever he sees to be convenient for us. As he has all Power in Heaven and Earth, and all Things at his Command, and does actually concern Himself in the Government of the World; so 'tis natural upon all Occasions to have Recourse to Him; since every thing may be done by His Assistance, and nothing can succeed against Him, or without Him.

WHERE-EVER these Notions of God have been receiv'd, Prayers have always been used; for they naturally follow from right Notions of the Being and Providence of God.

ACCORDINGLY we find the Practice of this Duty, as ancient as the World itself. When *Abel* offer'd that acceptable Sacrifice to God, 'tis reasonable to suppose it was accompanied both with Prayers and Praises, by which he obtain'd Witness that

SERM. he was righteous; God testifying of his

X. Gifts, *Gen. 4. 4. Hebr. 11. 4.* And 'tis
 said, upon the Birth of *Enos*, while *Adam*
 was yet alive; that then Men began to
 call upon the Name of the Lord, *Gen.*
4. 26. Thus early do we find this Pra-
 ctice of Prayers and Supplications to God;
 And from hence, it were easy to deduce
 it through all the succeeding Ages.

IMMEDIATELY after the Flood, as soon
 as *Noah* came out of the Ark, he built an
 Altar to the Lord, and made the Worship
 of God his first Care, *Gen. 8. 20.* The
 same we read of *Abraham*, upon the Pro-
 mise which God made him of the Land
 of *Canaan*; that he built an Altar unto
 the Lord, and called upon the Name of
 the Lord, chap. 12. ver. 7, 8. And his Ex-
 ample was follow'd by the rest of the Pa-
 triarchs, and in general by all the faith-
 ful People of God; whose constant Practice
 it was to make their humble Requests to
 God by Prayer, and devoutly to call up-
 on him, both for his daily Succour and
 Protection, and his more particular Help
 and Assistance upon particular Occasions.
 Instances of which, occur frequently in the
 History of the Old-Testament.

THE same Practice we find as early SERM.
amongst the Heathens, as we have any Ac- X.
counts of them from their Writings. No 
great Designs or publick Undertakings
were enter'd upon, without first invoking
Heaven for Assistance and Success. And in
Matters of a more private Nature, the or-
dinary Affairs of Life; Prayers were con-
stantly us'd, and the Business of the Day
begun and ended with them.

THUS ancient and universal was this
Practice of Praying to God : And thus it
continued 'till the World fell into Idola-
try, and their Notions of the Deity were
corrupted and deprav'd, and they *changed
the Glory of the uncorruptible God, into an
Image made like to corruptible Man, and
to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creep-
ing Things*, Rom. 1. 23. Then indeed this
Duty of Prayer began to be neglected,
and fell into disuse and decay.

AND this is agreeable to what has been
already said. For as Prayer is founded up-
on, and supported by right Notions of
God; so by consequence it must necessa-
rily decline and fall away, whenever these
true Notions are chang'd for such as are
false and superstitious.

SERM.

X.

WHILE we believe God to be infinitely Good, and Wise, and Powerful; that he governs the World, and takes cognizance of our Actions; The Sense of our own Wants and Infirmities will incline and ev'n force us to seek him by Prayer, and sue unto him for his Protection and Assistance.

BUT if, instead of this, we either set up an Idol in the Place of God, or entertain false and unworthy Conceptions of God; as that he is Cruel and Revengeful, and delights in the Misery of his Creatures; that he either cannot or will not help our Infirmities, and relieve our Wants; that he does every thing by Arbitrary Will and Irresistible Power, and has no Regard to the Carriage and Behaviour of his Creatures, nor makes any Difference between those who serve him, and those who serve him not: Then indeed we shall have no Encouragement to Pray to God, because we have no reason to hope that we shall ever obtain those Things which we pray for; and we may well say, *What Profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?*

BUT

BUT as long as we conceive of God SERM.
as we ought ; as a Wise, Holy, Just, and X.
Powerful Being, who presides over us, and
exercises these Attributes in the Govern-
ment of the World ; we have all imagin-
able Reason and Encouragement to Pray to
God, and to believe that He will hear the
Prayers of those who devoutly call upon
Him.

AND thus much I thought necessary
to premise concerning Prayer in general,
and to shew what Foundation there is for
this Duty. We see it is a part of Natural
Religion, and is grounded upon the Na-
ture and Attributes, the Being and Pro-
vidence of God. Accordingly it has been
the universal Practice of all Ages and Na-
tions, who have profess'd the Belief of the
True God ; All such have ever found in
themselves a natural Impulse to seek to
God in their Distress. Thus the Mariners
in the Ship with *Jonah*, did, by a meer
common Instinct of Nature, cry every Man
unto his God in their Distress, and press
Jonah to call upon his God, if so be that
God would think upon them that they pe-
rish not, *Jonah* 1. 5, 6. And this sufficient-
ly shews what the Sense of Nature is.

SERM. AND yet, notwithstanding this Duty of

X. Prayer is so very reasonable and natural, and has such a firm Foundation; the ancient Philosophers were much puzzled how to reconcile it with their Notions of *Fate* and *Necessity*: And some Moderns have endeavour'd to perplex it with several Objections they have rais'd against it; which I come now to consider.

AND here I think all the Objections which can be made against Prayer, may be reduc'd to these Two general Heads:

I. THOSE which make Prayer a fruitless and unprofitable Work, and suppose it impossible for us to reap any Benefit from it.

II, THOSE which make all Prayer needless and superfluous; since there is nothing which we can hope to obtain by Prayer, but we shall as certainly have without it.

I. THERE are some Objections which make Prayer a *fruitless* and *unprofitable* Work, and suppose it impossible for us to reap any Benefit from it,

AND

AND these Objections are grounded up- **SERM.**
on Two different and contrary Principles. **X.**

1. THAT all Things are fatally fix'd and determin'd; so that nothing which happens, could possibly have fallen out otherwise than it does.

2. THAT all Things happen by meer Chance, and that there is no such Thing as Providence in the World. If either of these Schemes were true, there would be no room or reason for Prayer.

1st. LET us consider that Objection against Prayer, which supposes all Things to be fatally fix'd and determin'd; so that nothing which happens, could possibly have fallen out otherwise than it does.

Now this Fate is of two sorts. 1. That which is Absolute and Universal, and includes ev'n God himself. 2. That which God himself is the Author of; and is nothing else but those Decrees which he is suppos'd to have made, whereby every thing that shall happen is already fix'd and determin'd.

1st. OF that Fate or Necessity, which is Absolute and Universal, and includes ev'n God himself.

SERM. Now they who subject the Deity himself to *Fate*, suppose the World, and all that is in it, to be a Necessary Effect or Product of the Divine Nature; that there is nothing made, but what must of Necessity have been made just as it now is; nothing brought about, that could possibly be hinder'd; so that all Events whatever are necessary, and must come to pass in the Manner they do.

BUT if there be such an Absolute Fate or Necessity as this, from which God himself is not exempted; it must arise either from something within God, or something without Him; either from the Perfections of his own Nature, or from some external Cause.

THERE can be no external Cause, nothing without God, which can lay this Necessity upon him; because he himself is the First Cause of all Things. He made every Thing that is; and therefore could have no Obligations laid upon him by the Things themselves, to make them before they were or had any Being. So that no external Cause could compel God to create the World, or any Thing that is in it; because,

because, before the World was actually made, there was no such Cause in Being.

NOR can any such Absolute Necessity, as this Objection supposes, arise from the Perfections of the Divine Nature; because such a Necessity is inconsistent with that Freedom of Will and Liberty of Choice, which is essential to God, and without which all his other Perfections are insignificant, and amount to nothing.

THERE is indeed a Moral Necessity, which God is subject to, as well as Man. And as we may truly say of a good Man, that he cannot knowingly and willingly do any base and wicked Action, because 'tis contrary to his Natural Temper, and to the Principles by which he is govern'd; so that, as long as he continues to be a good Man, he cannot do it, but must do the contrary: So we may truly say this of God, and with the greatest Certainty depend upon it, that he will not, that he cannot be guilty of any foolish or wicked Action; but must always do what, upon the Whole, is best and fittest to be done, upon account of his infinite Wisdom and Knowledge, and the Perfection and Rectitude of his Will.

THIS

SERM. THIS is all the Necessity which GOD
 X. can possibly lie under. But this is not a
 ~~~~~ Necessity of an Over-ruling Fate, but a  
 Necessity consistent with the most perfect  
 Freedom and Choice; For it arises from  
 nothing else but the infinite Wisdom and  
 Goodness of GOD, whereby he is con-  
 stantly prompted and directed to do what-  
 ever is best and fittest to be done.

AND this is so far from being any Ob-  
 jection against the Duty of Prayer, that  
 'tis the greatest Encouragement to it that  
 is possible: For it gives us a much greater  
 Assurance of Success in those Requests  
 which we put up to GOD, than in those  
 which we make to Men.

Mat. vii.  
 11.

*If ye being evil, (says our Saviour) know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Earthly Parents may mistake our Condition, and through Ignorance give us what is not good for us; or, through Passion and Ill-nature, deny us what is really for our good; or, through Poverty and Want, be unable to bestow it upon us. But there is nothing of this kind in GOD: He is infinitely Full, and cannot impoverish

verish himself by any thing he bestows **SERM.**  
upon us: He is infinitely Wise, and can- **X.**  
not be mistaken in our Condition: And  
He is infinitely Good, ev'n Goodness it  
self; and will have Compassion on us,  
and relieve our Wants.

HE is both able and willing to protect  
and encourage Piety and Virtue, and de-  
fend those that are Good and Virtuous  
against all unreasonable and wicked At-  
tempts. He will succour the Weak and  
Indigent; pity and pardon the Penitent  
and Contrite; help the Infirmities, and sup-  
ply the Necessities of his Creatures; and  
extend his Mercies over all his Works, and  
do every thing which is most agreeable to  
the general Good of the whole World; and  
the private Good of particular Creatures, as  
far as is consistent with That.

AND therefore, if we be careful to  
discharge our Duty, and live as becomes  
us; the Consideration of the Divine Per-  
fections, is a mighty Encouragement to  
us to pray to God; as they give us the  
greatest Assurance that our Prayers shall  
be heard, and our Petitions granted in  
such a manner as shall be best and most  
convenient for us,

THIS



**SERM.** THIS is such a Natural Consequence  
**X.** from the Perfections of God, that They  
 who neglect the Duty of Prayer as needless and superfluous, make This Pretence for their Neglect, That it is agreeable to the Goodness of God to take Care of his Creatures, and to give us those Things which we want, if we make our selves worthy of his Kindness: That He will do this of Himself, without our seeking: That as He knows what Things we have need of without our telling Him, so He will give us them without our asking, if we take care to deserve them; and if we do not this, 'tis not in our Power, by any Prayers we can make, to procure what we want. But this is what I shall consider in its proper Place.

IT appears then, that there is no such Necessity arising from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, as should discourage us from Praying to God; but, on the contrary, encourage us to it. For this Necessity does not make all Events necessary, but those only, which, if they were not brought about, would imply some Defect or Imperfection in GOD. But no One can say, that if every thing did not happen  
 just

just in that Manner it does, it wou'd argue **SERM.**  
any Defect or Imperfection in G O D. **X.**

**T**IS fit, for Instance, that those who neglect and forget G O D, should suffer for it ; and that those who serve and worship G O D, and acknowledge Him in all their Ways, should receive some Marks of his Favour ; So that Things might happen differently to the same Persons from what they do, without any Impeachment of the Wisdom and Justice of G O D. The same Persons enjoy that Good, and suffer that Evil, which they might at the same time have been without, had their Carriage and Behaviour towards G O D been different from what it is.

**F**OR the Perfections of the Divine Nature do by no means make it necessary that all Events should in themselves be just such as they are at present, but that they should always be agreeable to the Reason of Things, and govern'd by the immutable Rules of Wisdom, Justice and Truth. This Necessity indeed God is under, from the infinite Perfections of his Nature : But this Necessity is our greatest Security ; since hereby we are assur'd that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, but that  
it

SERM. it shall go well with the Righteous, and  
 X. evil shall be to them that do evil.



THIS may be further illustrated from what we see in the Natural World. The Perfections of the Divine Nature, the infinite Wisdom and Power and Goodness of God, do indeed make it necessary that this visible Frame of Nature, the Material World, and all Things belonging to it, should be contriv'd with the exactest Order, and most for the Good and Well-being of the Whole; as the Work of a complete Artificer will be perfect in its kind.

ACCORDINGLY the *Mosaical* Account of the Creation, ends with this Remark; Gen. i. 31. that *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.* Every Creature of God is good; and God had before pronounc'd of every Day's Work, *that it was good*: But take the whole Work together, and it is *very good*, and the best contriv'd that could be. And thus it appears to be, as far as we are capable of judging, and according to the best Discoveries we can make. And yet several Things in the World are plainly the most Arbitrary imaginable, and might have





have been made and diversify'd a thousand different Ways from what they are at present; and yet as much Beauty, and Order, and Regularity preserv'd in the Whole, as there appears to be now.

It is undeniable, that there might have been more or fewer Species of Animals than there are now, and those in all respects different from the present. The Number and Order of the Planets and Heavenly Bodies, together with the Direction of their several Motions, might certainly have been different from what they are; and yet both their Beauty and Usefulness maintain'd.

INDEED, no one considerable Part of the Creation could have been made after a different Manner from what it is, unless the other Parts had been proportionably alter'd too, and adapted to it. But 'tis manifest that the Whole might, by the same Wisdom and Power, have been fashion'd and contriv'd differently from what it is, and vary'd infinite ways; and yet have been equally beautiful and useful.

ALL the Necessity therefore that arises from the Divine Perfections, is, that the Works

**SERM.** Works of God should be Complete and  
**X** Perfect in their Kind; not that God should  
 be ty'd down to any particular Manner of  
 Working, so that a Variation from it  
 should imply any Contradiction or Imper-  
 fection in God. 'Tis not an Absolute  
 Necessity, but a Necessity of Fitness only,  
 and which results from the most Perfect  
 Wisdom and Freest Choice.

Thus, we see, it is in the Material  
 World. And thus it is in the Moral World;  
 where God's Perfections make it Necessary  
 for Him to do what, upon the Whole,  
 is most for the Good of his Creatures,  
 but do not restrain Him to any particular  
 Dispensations of his Providence, so that  
 Things could fall out no otherwise than as  
 they do at present. For God has infinite  
 Ways to bring about his Designs, and can  
 turn either the Prosperity or Adversity of  
 particular Persons to his own Glory. He  
 can bring Good out of Evil, and dispose  
 of the Condition of private People as he  
 pleases; and yet carry on his main De-  
 sign.

So that, since the Perfections of the  
 Divine Nature do not lay God under any  
 other Necessity than of doing what, upon  
 the

the Whole, is best and fittest to be done; SERM.  
X.  
and governing the World, according to the strictest Rules of Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness; and since he has a thousand Methods unknown to us, whereby he can do This; 'tis evident that no particular Event whatever, is necessary, and such as he could not have hinder'd; there is nothing made, but what he could either not have made, or made after another Manner; nothing brought about, but what he could either have hinder'd, or done after another Fashion. So that, notwithstanding all his Perfections, he is endu'd with the most perfect Freedom of Will and Liberty of Choice, and can do whatever he pleases, and in whatever Manner.

THERE is therefore no such thing in Nature as an Absolute and Universal Fate, to which the Deity it self is subject. For such a Fate as binds God Himself, must arise either from something within him, or something without him; either from some external Cause, or from the Perfections of his own Nature.

THERE can be nothing without God, no external Cause which can lay any Necessity upon Him, or constrain Him to act



SERM. after any particular manner ; because He  
 X. was before all things, and the First Cause  
 of them ; and nothing could lay an Obligation upon Him antecedent to its own Being, or move Him to act before it was.

AND as all Things deriv'd their Beings, and all their Powers from God ; so, after they were created, they must necessarily be subject to Him, and entirely at his disposal. As He was prior to Them, so He must always be superior to Them, and have them always in his Power, and therefore cannot possibly be under any Necessity from Them.

NOR can any such Necessity arise from his own infinite Perfections, as destroys his Liberty of Will, and Freedom of Choice : because such a Necessity would at the same time destroy those very Perfections, from whence some would have it arise. For what is Power, or Wisdom, or Goodness, without Liberty of Will and Freedom of Choice ?

POWER, in this Case, would be wholly passive ; and instead of acting, would be acted upon, and determin'd continually to the Production of such Events as itself could not hinder ; which would indeed be

be Weakness, rather than Power. Wisdom **SERM.**  
would be altogether insignificant, since it **X.**  
would not be at Liberty to follow its  
own Directions. And Goodness it self,  
tho' it might intend kindly, would yet  
be defeated, if it were depriv'd of bestow-  
ing its Favours where it most affected to  
do it; and where it did so, it would not  
be Goodness, because it was not free, and  
could not *but* be thus Beneficial to us.

INDEED all these Perfections do ne-  
cessarily imply Freedom and Choice; with-  
out this, they are no Perfections at all,  
and the very Being of a God is destroy'd.  
If God be a Necessary Agent, He is desti-  
tute of all Perfections; and can no more  
be said to be the Cause of any one thing  
in the World, than a Stone is the Cause  
of its own falling down, and striking the  
Ground. This Supposition, makes all  
things equally self-existent with God Him-  
self; or at least as necessarily Existent as  
He; since He could no more hinder their  
existence than his own: And this either  
leaves no room for God, or confounds  
him with the World, and terminates in  
downright Atheism.

SERM.

X.



IF therefore there be a God, 'tis utterly impossible there should be any such Fate or Necessity as this Objection supposes; which binds God himself, so that He cannot Act otherwise than he does. He can be under none but a Moral Necessity, a Necessity of acting wisely, and doing what is in all respects best and fittest to be done; of dealing justly and mercifully with his Creatures, and rewarding them according to their Carriage and Behaviour towards Him. And This is the firmest Foundation for Prayer, and all Religion, and Religious Worship.

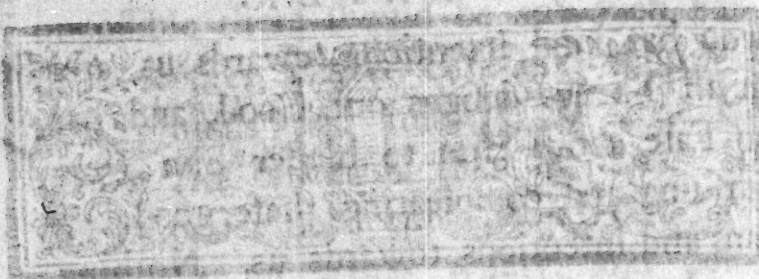
So that we cannot say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what Profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?* For the Almighty is a Being of infinite Perfections, who has all Power in his Hands, and all Things at his Disposal; who is free from all Restraints, but those which his own boundless Wisdom, and Justice, and Goodness, and other Attributes lay upon Him; and which only restrain Him from doing any thing unworthy of Himself, or prejudicial to his Creatures; who is under no Necessity but that of acting wisely, and doing the Thing that is right; who



who has kind Intentions towards us, and in all Things designs our Good, and has no Fate above Him to hinder him from pursuing and compleating these good Designs and Intentions towards us. Nothing can do this, but our own Sin and Folly, our own Wickedness and Perverseness, our wilful Neglect to serve him, and obstinately refusing to Pray unto him. And thus I have shewn, that there is no such thing as an Absolute and Universal Fate which includes God himself; and consequently, no reason upon that Account to neglect this *Duty of Prayer*. I should now proceed to consider, in the 2<sup>d</sup> Place, whether there be any such Fate as God himself is suppos'd to be the Author of, and whereby he has already fix'd and determin'd every thing that shall happen: So that it would be altogether in vain to pray for any thing we want, or against any thing we fear; since what will be, must be, and there is no possibility of its being hinder'd. But of This at some other Opportunity.



214



do this but one way and I will  
own it. I have no other  
to be done and others  
I have no other way. I have no  
other way. I have no other way.  
I have no other way. I have no  
other way. I have no other way.

St. James  
XI

to be done and others  
I have no other way. I have no  
other way. I have no other way.  
I have no other way. I have no  
other way. I have no other way.  
I have no other way. I have no  
other way. I have no other way.

II. The

X



## J O B xxi. 15.

*What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?*

**M**Y Design, from these Words, **SERM.**  
is to **Examine and Answer XI.**  
those **Objections** which are  
made against the **Duty of**  
**Prayer.** And these **Objec-**  
tions, I told you, in my last Discourse,  
might be reduc'd to these **Two general**  
**Heads.**

**I. THOSE** which make **Prayer** a *fruit-*  
*less* and *unprofitable* Work, and sup-  
pose it impossible for us to reap any  
Benefit from it.

X 4

II. **THOSE**



SERM.

XI.



II. THOSE which make Prayer a needless and superfluous Work; since there is nothing which we can hope to obtain by Prayer, but what we shall as certainly have without it.

I have begun to Examine those Objections against Prayer, which suppose it a fruitless and unprofitable Work, and that it is impossible for us to reap any Benefit from it.

AND these Objections I observ'd to be grounded upon Two different and contrary Principles.

I. THAT all Things are fatally fix'd and determin'd; so that nothing which happens, could possibly have fallen out otherwise than it does.

2. THAT all Things happen by meer Chance, and that there is no such Thing as a Providence in the World.

IF either of these Schemes were true, there would indeed be no room or reason for Prayer; and we might well say, with these Prophane Ones in the Text, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* &c.

1<sup>st</sup>. OF that Objection against Prayer, which supposes all Things to be fatally fix'd

fix'd and determin'd; so that nothing which happens, could possibly have fallen out otherwise than it does. SERM.  
XI.

AND this *Fate* is of two sorts. 1. That which is Absolute and Universal, and includes ev'n God himself. 2. That which God himself is the Author of; and is nothing else but those Decrees, which he is suppos'd to have made, and whereby every Thing, that shall happen, is already fix'd and determin'd.

THE *First* of these *Fates* I have already Examined at large. I come now, in the *Second* Place, to examine,

2. THAT *Fate* which God himself is suppos'd to be the Author of, and whereby He has Unalterably fix'd and decreed every thing that shall happen, without any Regard to Us, or any of our Endeavours and Actions: I say, without any Regard to Us, or any of our Endeavours and Actions: Because tho' God has decreed every thing that shall happen, yet if He has done this upon a previous View and Foreknowledge of our Actions, and has decreed all Events so as they shall suit with our Carriage and Behaviour towards Him; this (as I shall shew) does  
not

SERM. not affect the Duty of Prayer, or make it

XI. vain and unprofitable.



BUT the Opinion I am at present considering, is that of the most rigid Fatalists, which supposes that God has, from all Eternity, without respect to any thing but his own Arbitrary Will, decreed every thing which shall come to pass : That He has Unalterably and Unconditionally fix'd both the Natural and Moral, the Temporal and Eternal State of all Men ; so that they can never, by Prayers or Endeavours, or any Means they can use, make any Change or Alteration in their Condition, or contribute in the least towards it. Every thing which is to befall them, is long since fix'd by a firm Decree which they cannot pass, by inexorable and invincible Fate ; deaf to all Prayers, and insuperable by the greatest Labour.

THIS Fate is the same, with respect to us, as the former. That, was suppos'd to bind God as well as Men. This, tho' it leaves God at Liberty ; yet it lays as Absolute a Restraint upon us, and cuts off all Hope of Help and Assistance from Him. So that here too We may say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ?* &c.

BUT



BUT this Fate, however it has been SERM.  
maintain'd by some Christians, is much XI.  
worse than any which the Heathens themselves asserted, who had more honourable and worthy Thoughts of God than these. Very few or none of the Heathens, excepting *Democritus*, subjected the Soul to an Over-ruling Necessity. They exempted the Mind of Man from the Power and Dominion of Fate, and left it possess'd of its just and natural Liberty. So that tho' they made all Events Fatal, which concern'd Mens outward Condition; yet they constantly maintain'd, that our true Happiness, Wisdom and Virtue, was in our own Power. Nor did they extend this Fatality beyond the present Life; For such of them as held the Immortality of the Soul and a Future State, believ'd, that our Happiness or Misery in That State, depended upon our good or bad Behaviour in This; which they supposed beforehand to be in our own Power.

THOSE who held all Events which relate to this present Life, fatally determin'd; did, many of them at least, suppose this Fatality to proceed, not from God himself, but from some Defects and Irre-

SERM. Irregularities in Matter, which God could not correct or prevent. So far were they from making God the immediate Cause of any part of the Misery of his Creatures..

XI.

OTHERS again, seem to understand nothing more by that Fate which they assert, but the immutable Laws of Righteousness, Justice and Truth, which God inviolably observes in his Government of the World.

AND several others who maintain a *Fate* in a stricter Sense of that word, do not set up for an Absolute, Unconditional *Fate*; but a *Fate* which depends upon some certain Conditions, and which may be prevented or overcome.

IN a word; If we examine the Opinions of the Ancient Fatalists, we shall find few or none of them which do not suit better with the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Man, and cast a more favourable Eye upon Human Liberty, than that Modern Notion which some have set up and endeavour'd to maintain; I mean that which I have just now mention'd, that all Events whatever are fatally fix'd and determin'd, whether relating to this Life or

or another; and that it is not in our **SERM.**  
Power, by any Prayers or Endeavours, to **XI.**  
contribute any thing towards procuring  
our Happiness, or avoiding our Misery,  
either here or hereafter.

BUT let us see what ground there is  
for any such Opinion as this; whether  
it can be supported either by Reason or  
Revelation.

As to Reason; That is certainly against  
this Notion. Such an Absolute Uncon-  
ditional Fate as this, which deprives us  
of all Liberty of Thought, and Freedom  
of Action, and puts every thing out of  
our Power; is not only contrary to Rea-  
son, but is a downright Defiance of com-  
mon Sense, and the daily Experience of  
Mankind. We find in ourselves a Liber-  
ty of Thought, and Freedom of Action:  
We can prefer Motion to Rest, as we  
please; and chuse one Action before an-  
other. We can pitch upon what we will,  
for the Subject of our Thoughts, or the  
Aim of our Actions; and can pursue this  
Enquiry, and follow that Design, as long and  
as little as we think fit. This Freedom,  
I think, we are as certain of, as of our own  
Existence, and that of other Things about  
us;



SERM. us; And we may as well say, that our  
**XI.** whole Life is a Dream, and that there  
is nothing Real in the World, but all is  
Fancy, as say that every Thought of our  
Mind, and Action of our Life, is fatally  
determin'd; and that it was not in our  
Power to alter or prevent it. And to  
say, that whatever we at last fix upon,  
was what we were necessarily determin'd  
to, and could not but do; is only a Fal-  
lacy, and begging the Question; and no-  
thing at all to the Purpose. 'Tis indeed,  
perhaps, what in a strict Sense cannot  
be disprov'd; as many other Things can-  
not, which yet we are sure are false.  
But the Natural Arguments against it,  
from our own inward Experience and Con-  
viction; are much stronger, than all that  
can be form'd Artificially for it.

HERE therefore, we must appeal to  
the common Sense and Experience which  
every Man has, of what passes within his  
own Breast; from whence every Man  
will naturally conclude himself to be a  
Free Agent.

IT is upon this, that all Laws and  
Governments, both Human and Divine  
are founded; all which are plainly insigni-  
ficant,

nificant, and to no manner of Purpose, if **SERM.**  
Men have no Self-government, no Power **XI.**  
over themselves and their own Actions.

IF Man be a Necessary Agent, and fatally determin'd in all his Actions; we might as well attempt to set Bounds to the Sea, and lay Winds and Tempests, as restrain Mens unruly Lusts and Passions, and put any stop to that Wickedness which is in the World. Indeed, upon this Supposition, there wou'd be no such thing as Wickedness; no Virtue or Vice, nor any thing which deserv'd either Praise or Reproof, Reward or Punishment. All Actions would be alike, and every thing upon a level; or rather, there would be nothing which could, in any Propriety, be call'd our own Act, and we be said to be the Authors of it. And therefore, further: Upon this Supposition, not only Prayers, but all manner of Endeavours after any thing whatever, are vain and to no Purpose; for such a Fate as this, equally affects the Civil and Religious Life. And they that hold an Absolute Fatality of all Events whatever, and that God has left nothing in our own Power in any Degree whatever; ought, if they would act consistently with

SERM. with themselves, and their own Principles,  
 XI. not only to abstain from Prayer, but from  
 using any Natural Means for the obtaining  
 what they want. Upon this Supposition,  
*'tis in vain to rise early, and late take rest,*  
*and eat the bread of carefulness;* since  
 whether we shall be Rich or Poor, is al-  
 ready determin'd; and we can neither pre-  
 vent the one, nor promote the other. 'Tis  
 equally vain to use Physick when we are  
 Sick, or take any Measures to preserve or  
 recover our Health; since whether we  
 shall Live or Die, be Well or Ill, is fatal-  
 ly determin'd, and must accordingly hap-  
 pen, whatever we do, or whether we do  
 anything or no.

In short: If all Events whatever, relating  
 both to this Life and the next, be fatally  
 determined, without any regard to our  
 Actions and Behaviour; all our Powers and  
 Faculties both of Body and Mind are  
 given us to no Purpose, and are nothing  
 at all; and we have nothing left us to do,  
 no Duty to God, no Service to our selves or  
 others; and we may as well sit still with  
 our Arms folded, as set about any Business;  
 since whatever Good or Ill will befall us,  
 must of Necessity happen, and we can  
 neither



neither help forward the one, nor hinder the other. SERM. XI.

THE only thing that can be said to avoid this Absurdity, is, that we are to use Means in order to obtain any End, because we are fatally determin'd to do so; so that we must act just as we do, and as if it were in our Power, by the Use of proper Means, to contribute towards those Ends which we desire. But if the Event of Things be fatally fix'd, 'tis to no Purpose that we should be necessarily determin'd to the Use of any Means; nor can they be called Means, upon which the End has no sort of Dependance, and which have no manner of Efficacy towards the obtaining any End. Besides that we find in our selves a Power of chusing what Means we will; of using any, or none at all. And we are as certain that we have such a Power, as we are of any thing else in the World.

BUT if this be still deny'd, the same Absurdity still follows as before; That tho' we do use Means, yet if we be necessarily determin'd to the Use of these Means, there is no Good or Evil in any of our Actions; Nothing which we do, deserves

SERM. Rewards or Punishments. All Laws and

XI. Government; all Precepts and Exhortations; all Praise and Reproof, are insignificant. And Men may as well be left to themselves; since they must take their Course, and nothing which they do can be hinder'd.

AND if it be yet urg'd, that God has fatally determin'd the Use of these Means. I answer, That this is an endless Circle of Absurdities. For if God has determin'd the Use of them, and yet before-hand fix'd all the Ends, Issues, and Events of Things; He has determin'd them to no manner of Purpose; and might with as much reason have necessitated us to use the quite contrary, or none at all.

THUS I think it fully appears, that an Absolute Unconditional Fatality of all Events, such as destroys the Liberty of Human Nature, and makes Men Necessary Agents; is a most absurd Opinion, and directly contrary both to plain Reason and common Sense. Let us, in the next place, briefly see what Countenance it has from Revelation.

NOW Revelation plainly supposes Men to be endu'd with understanding Minds  
and

and Free Faculties ; and 'tis to no purpose SERM.  
for God to reveal His Will, and make XI.

known his Pleasure to us, if it is not in  
our Power to hearken to it, and do it.

In vain has God set before us Life and  
Death, Good and Evil, if it is not in  
our Power to put forth our Hand, and  
chuse whether of the two it most liketh  
us. All the Exhortations which God has

made by his Prophets, rising up early and  
sending them, are likewise insignificant,  
if Men are necessarily determin'd in all  
their Actions, and their Happiness or Mi-  
sery is already fatally fix'd and decreed.

Upon this Supposition, what our Saviour  
says might be literally accomplish'd, and  
God might as well raise up Children to  
*Abraham* out of the Stones of the Streets,  
as from among the Sons of Men, since  
the one would be as capable of following  
his Instructions as the other.

If we consider the New Testament,  
we shall find that That Revelation is  
grounded upon the Liberty of our Wills,  
and the Freedom of our Actions ; and does  
in every part plainly suppose it.

THAT perfect Example which our  
Saviour has set us, and commanded us to

follow ;



SERM. follow; those many moving and pathetick

XI. Exhortations to come unto Him, and embrace his Doctrine; those frequent Expostulations which he makes to the People of the *Jews*, upbraiding them with their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart; those excellent Precepts and Rules of Life, which He has given his Followers; those exceeding great and precious Promises which he has made to those who obey Him, and those terrible Threatnings He has denounc'd to all who refuse to hearken to Him and obey Him: I say, all this undeniably supposes us to be Free Creatures, and to have a Power over our own Actions; and that the last Issue and Event of Things is not fatally fix'd, without any regard to our Carriage and Behaviour. For if it were, and nothing at all were left to our own Management and Power; all these Exhortations and Reproofs, all these Promises and Threatnings, would be nothing else in God, but mocking of his Creatures, a meer sporting with their Infirmities, and upbraiding them with what they could not possibly Help. It would be like calling upon the Lame to Walk, commanding the Blind to See, and the Deaf to Hear.

T H E R E

THERE is therefore no such Fate as SERM.  
makes all Events whatever unavoidable, XI.  
and all our Actions Necessary, and what  
we could not Help. No, *God forbid*; (as  
the Apostle says in another Case, *Rom.*  
*3. 6.*) *for then, how shall God judge the*  
*World?* If we are Necessary Agents, we  
neither are, nor can be accountable for  
any of our Actions; and there is no room  
left for a Future Judgment, no Founda-  
tion for Rewards and Punishments.

So that, upon this Scheme, all the Re-  
velations which God has made of Himself  
to the World, and all his Dealings and  
Transactions with Mankind, are without  
any Meaning and Signification, and serve  
to no manner of End or Purpose.

AND as to *Prayer* in particular, 'tis to  
be observ'd, that in those Revelations which  
God has made of his Will to Mankind,  
he has expressly commanded the frequent  
Use and Practice of it, and suspended his  
Favours and Blessings upon it. He has  
enjoin'd it by his Servants the Prophets;  
by his Son and his Apostles. The Scrip-  
tures are full of Commendation of it, and  
give us many Instances of the Virtue and  
Efficacy of it, and contain several Precepts

SERM. and Directions about it. All which is  
 XI. utterly inconsistent with such an Absolute  
 and Unconditional Fate, as excludes Prayer  
 and all manner of Endeavour; and makes  
 every Event, every Thing that shall  
 happen, in the strictest sense, Necessary;  
 and what must be just as it is, or will be,  
 without any regard to our Actions and  
 Behaviour.

IT remains therefore, that one of the two  
 following Schemes must be true: For we can  
 conceive no other which is consistent with  
 the Goodness, and Justice, and Truth, and  
 other Attributes of God; and agreeable to  
 what he has discover'd of himself to us,  
 and those Dealings and Transactions he has  
 had with us. Either, 1<sup>st</sup>, That God has  
 from the Beginning, upon that Foresight  
 and Knowledge which He unquestionably  
 had of Mens Actions and Behaviour, laid  
 the whole Series of Natural Causes and  
 Effects, and made one entire Chain of  
 Events, no one Link of which is to be  
 broken; and so accommodated the State  
 of the Natural to that of the Moral World,  
 that every One shall be dealt with ac-  
 cording to his Deserts; and every thing  
 done at all times, which is then most fit and  
 proper



proper to be done, as much as if He did miraculously and immediately interpose upon particular Occasions. Or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, That God has not laid any such Train or Series of Things; but left himself, if I may so speak, at perfect liberty to act as he pleases, *pro re nata*, as Occasion serves, and as the present Posture of Affairs require; and does actually exert his Power anew upon particular Occasions, and interpose to the bringing about such Events as are correspondent to the good or ill Behaviour of his Creatures.

I say, one of these two Schemes is most certainly the Truth of the Case. And 'tis almost indifferent which of them we chuse, since they are both consistent with all the Attributes and Perfections of God, and with the Freedom and Liberty of Men; and may be perfectly reconcil'd, tho' not equally easily, with the Duty of Prayer, and the Use of all other Means and Endeavours.

FOR, 1<sup>st</sup>, If we suppose, what some take to be the Case, that God did from the Beginning dispose the whole Series of Natural Causes, and fore-ordain or decree every thing that shall happen; he did

SERM. This, upon the previous View and Know-  
 XI. ledge which he had of the future Actions  
 and Behaviour of Men; and accordingly,  
 when he settled the whole Course of Na-  
 ture, and disposed of all Events, he did  
 in this very Constitution and Disposition  
 of all Things, make Provision for the  
 Moral Behaviour of his Creatures, so  
 that suitable Rewards and Punishments  
 should befall the Virtuous and the  
 Wicked.

He foresaw, for Instance, the Devotion  
 of his Worshippers, the Prayers of those  
 who diligently seek him; and has so or-  
 der'd the Series of Natural Causes, that  
 suitable Events should befall them, and suit-  
 able Answers be return'd to their Prayers.  
 He foresaw who would neglect and for-  
 get him, who would not serve or seek  
 him; and accordingly provided that they  
 also should be dealt with suitably to their  
 Demerits.

So that, upon this Scheme, Blessings  
 and Judgments are still the proper Ob-  
 jects of Prayer and Deprecation; because  
 thro' the whole Frame of Nature, and eve-  
 ry Thing that shall ever happen in the  
 World, he suppos'd already fix'd and set-  
 tled;

ted; yet it was certainly so fix'd and settl'd with Regard to, and in Prospect of our Carriage and Behaviour towards God, and in Correspondence to our good or ill Actions, foreseen and presuppos'd by God, in this Primitive Constitution of all Things; And therefore every thing is as much Matter, and as fit Subject for Prayer, as if God was immediately to interpose upon every Occasion.

FOR ev'n in This Scheme God has made nothing Absolutely Necessary, but only Conditionally, and with a particular Regard to our Actions and Behaviour; and his Providence is as much to be acknowledg'd, and his Protection implor'd, as if he had fix'd no such Order, but reserv'd every thing to be done, as it were, upon the Spot, and as the Exigency of Affairs should require. And 'tis certainly all one to us, whether God answers our Prayers by particular Interpositions of his Providence, or has so dispos'd the whole Course and Series of Things, that the same Returns shall be made Us without any such direct and immediate Interpositions.

BUT here that old and celebrated Difficulty naturally arises, how the Prescience



**SERM.** or Foreknowledge of God can consist with  
 XI. the Freedom of Mens Actions, and the  
 Contingency of Events. For if God fore-  
 sees all Events, they must necessarily fall  
 out just as they do; and if he knows  
 beforehand how we shall behave our  
 selves, we cannot possibly act otherwise  
 than we do; both Things and Actions  
 must unavoidably be just in that Manner,  
 wherein they are foreseen and foreknown  
 by God.

I shall not enter at present upon a  
 full Solution of this Difficulty, nor will  
 it come within the Limits of this Dis-  
 course. All that I shall at present ob-  
 serve, is, that the Divine Prescience or  
 Foreknowledge has no Natural Influence  
 upon our Actions, nor does in any mea-  
 sure affect the Circumstances or Manner  
 of the Existence of any Thing. If there  
 was not this Foreknowledge in God, all  
 Things would still be equally certain and  
 necessary as they are at present. Our  
 knowledge of some Things that they are,  
 does not make them ever the more cer-  
 tain and necessary; for Things would still  
 be what they are, whether we knew them  
 or no. Now Foreknowledge in God, is  
 the

the same as Knowledge is in us. All Things are to him, in this respect, equally present. He as perfectly knows what is to come, as We do what is already present, and before us. But why should Foreknowledge affect Things to come, any more than Knowledge does those that now are? Or how does this Perfection of Foreknowledge in God, destroy that of Freedom in Men, by necessarily influencing their Actions? And yet unless this could be prov'd, which it cannot, nor has ever been pretended to, That God's Foreknowledge has a natural and necessary Influence upon Things, to make them such as they are; the Objection comes to nothing.

FOR as to the Difficulty of conceiving the Manner how God can foresee Futurities, without a Chain of necessary Causes; this does not affect the present Argument; because there are other Things without Number, which we cannot explain, and which yet we are certain of the Truth of. Of this kind, are all the Perfections of the Divine Nature; which, as they are infinite, so they must exceed the Capacities of finite Understandings, and be to us incomprehensible.

AND

SERM.

XI. AND as to the present Case; whatever Difficulties there may be in explaining the Divine Prescience, and reconciling it with the Freedom of our Actions; we may be certain, that it does not destroy our Natural Liberty. Because God himself, notwithstanding his Foreknowledge, treats us as Free Creatures, in all his Dealings with us; and all the Overtures he has made us, as I have already observ'd, would be very absurd, if we were Necessary Agents, or were Fatally concluded in all our Actions by his Foreknowledge.

2. BUT if this be such a Difficulty as we cannot get over, in this Scheme, which supposes God to have dispos'd all Events upon a Prospect and Foreknowledge which he had of our Carriage and Behaviour; and laid them so, as that they shall exactly answer to it: We may have recourse to the 2<sup>d</sup> Scheme I mention'd, which supposes God to interpose upon every worthy Occasion, and actually to exert a new Power upon every new Turn in the World; and suit the Dispensations of his Providence to the Behaviour of his Creatures, and to the sudden Emergency of Things.

AND

THE



THE First of these Schemes may possibly be most Philosophical, and serve best to display the immense and boundless Perfections of God ; but This is most Scriptural, and suits best with our Weakness and Imperfections.

THIS is indeed the safest, and most satisfactory Supposition we can go upon ; That God does actually concern himself with our Affairs, and does immediately interpose as he sees Occasion ; That he presides over the World in an especial Manner, and has not once for all ordered every thing that shall happen, but is daily employ'd in watching over us for our Good ; in making such Changes and Alterations as are necessary, and disposing every thing for the best. There is no reason why we may not suppose God to act after this manner ; there is nothing in this Notion, which derogates from His Majesty, or is inconsistent with any of his Perfections. For why may not God govern the World with as great Liberty and Freedom, as a Wise and Good Man governs his Family, or a Prince his Kingdoms ? And is it not very agreeable to the Wisdom and Goodness and Justice

SERM.

XI.

of

SERM.

XI

of God, to suit the Dispensations of his Providence to the Behaviour of his Creatures; to punish the Wicked, and reward the Righteous, and ev'n to change his Dealings towards Men, according to the Circumstances of Affairs, and the Alteration of their Carriage towards Him; to exert himself upon particular Occasions, and interpose his Power and Providence as often as there is any reason for so doing?

THIS is no such Change as is unworthy of God, and inconsistent with the Immutability of his Nature. On the contrary, this is being constant to the Reason of Things: which is the truest Constancy, and most worthy of God. This is to do always what is best, and wisest, and fittest to be done; and to keep inflexibly to the Eternal Rule of Right. We do not charge any Man with Fickleness and Inconstancy, for changing his Resolutions and Actions, according as a wise and immutable Rule requires him to change: Then only he is inconstant, when he changes without any Reason, or against it; when he alters his Methods of Proceeding, while the Case still remains the same, and

and he is oblig'd by all the Reason in **SERM.**  
the world still to act after the same **XI.**  
Manner.

If therefore it be a standing Rule of the Divine Providence, that those who honour him, should be honour'd and rewarded by him; and that those who forget and neglect him, should be, not barely overlook'd, but punish'd by him: If it be upon other Accounts agreeable to Reason, (as I shall shew in the Sequel of this Discourse) that God should bless and prosper those who devoutly worship him and call upon him; and that he should deny his Mercies to those, and suffer his Judgments to overtake them, who refuse to serve and worship him, and will not pray unto him: Then it is no Disparagement to the Immutability of his Wisdom and Goodness, to order Things upon the Spot so as shall best suit the Deserts or Demerits of his Creatures; to give those good Things to his devout Worshippers, which he would not have given, had they not devoutly call'd upon him; and send those Judgments upon profane Persons, which he would have averted had they been pious; In a word, to distinguish Men by immediate  
Acts



SERM. Acts of his Providence, and deal differently with the same Persons at different Times, according to the difference of their Carriage and Behaviour towards him; and all this, by present and immediate Changes in his Government of the World, and the Distribution of the good and evil Things of Life. This Notion is what the Scripture most favours. God is there represented to us, as continually adapting the Dispensations of his Providence to the Behaviour of his Creatures; as hearing the Prayers of his faithful Servants, and granting their Requests; and ev'n changing his Counsels according as he has been mov'd by the Intercession of good Men, or the Change or Reformation of others.

A famous Instance of the first kind we meet with in *Exodus*, chap. xxxii. ver. 9, 10, &c. where, at the Intercession of *Moses* for *Israel*, when they had made the Golden Calf and worshipped it, he spar'd them, after he had threatned their Ruin. Of which the *Psalmist* tells us, *Psal.* 106. 23. He said he would destroy them, had not *Moses* his chosen stood before them in the breach; to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.

AN Instance of the other kind, we have **SERM.**  
in general from God himself, *Jer. 18. 7, &c.* **XI.**

*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

**THUS** does God represent himself, not as ty'd up by any Decrees he has made, or any Chain and Succession of Events which he has laid suitably to Mens Behaviour, but as at perfect Liberty of Acting upon all Occasions as he sees fit, and making what Changes he pleases in the Methods and Manner of his Dealings with Men.

**THIS** (we see) he declares, he does in his Government of whole Nations and Kingdoms. And we may be sure that his

**SERM.** Government of particular Persons is of a piece with That ; because it is nothing else but a more particular Application of those universal Laws of Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice, by which He rules. And of this too, wou'd the Time permit me, I might produce several Instances out of Scripture.

**XI.**

Now whether we can explain the Manner how God is mov'd by our Prayers, or no ; and how those Affections which the Scripture attributes to God, subsist in the Divine Nature : If the Scripture be a good Rule of believing and speaking, we may very honourably say That of God, which he says of himself ; and believe that he does, upon the devout Prayers of good Men, exert a new and immediate Power in the World, and in a particular manner interpose with his Providence in their Favour.

**SUCH** a Representation of God, as 'tis warranted by Scripture, so is it most accommodated to our Capacities ; and is the firmest Foundation, and affords the clearest Reason for this Duty of Prayer.

**THUS**



THUS I have fully consider'd all those Objections against Prayer, which are grounded upon *Fate* or *Necessity*; and have shewn, that there is no such *Fate* or *Necessity* as is inconsistent with this Duty; but that God is free, and Men are free, and Events are free; so that we cannot say, upon any of these Accounts, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* &c.



2

18

Thus I have fully considered all those Objections against Prayer which are suggested by the late Mr. Hume, and have found that there is no inconsistency or necessity as is inconsistent with the Duty; that that God is free, and that we are free, and Events are free; so that we cannot lay upon any of these accounts. What is the Necessity that we should force him? &c.



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FRONT D

THE DUTY AND BENEFIT  
 SERM. XII.  
 Those which make it altogether

LY HAVE WITHOUT IT

THOSE OBJECTIONS WHICH MAKE PRAYER  
 A FRUITLESS AND UNPROFITABLE WORK; AND SUP-

*What is the Almighty, that we  
 should serve him? and what  
 profit should we have, if we  
 pray unto him?*

all things happen by mere Chance; and

**T**HE Objections against the  
 Duty of Prayer, which I  
 took Occasion, from these  
 Words, to examine and an-  
 swer; I told you, might be  
 reduc'd to these Two general Heads.

SERM.  
 XII.

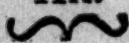
I. THOSE which make Prayer a fruit-  
 less and unprofitable Work; and sup-  
 pose it impossible for us to reap any  
 Benefit from it.

of the World.

BUT Z 3 II. THOSE



SERM.  
XII.



II. THOSE which make it altogether needless and superfluous; since there is nothing which we can hope for from Prayer, but we shall as certainly have without it.

THOSE Objections which make Prayer a fruitless and unprofitable Work, and suppose it impossible for us to reap any Benefit from it; go upon one of these two Principles. Either, 1<sup>st</sup>. That all Things are fatally fix'd and determin'd; so that nothing which happens, could possibly fall out otherwise than it does. Or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, That all Things happen by meer Chance; and that God's Providence is not at all concern'd in the Government of the World.

THE *first* of these Principles I have examin'd at large. I proceed now to consider the *other* Principle which this Objection goes upon, which supposes Prayer a fruitless and unprofitable Work, and that we can never reap any Benefit from it: And that is, that all Things happen by *meer Chance*, and that God does not at all concern Himself in the Government of the World,

BUT this is such an absurd Opinion, SERM. XII.  
 and so contrary to all the Appearances  
 of Things, that it does not need any la-  
 borious Confutation. If we believe there  
 is a God who made the World, we must  
 believe that he governs it too, and pre-  
 sides over it. For Chance could no more  
 govern this World, than it could create  
 it. And if it be absurd to suppose, that  
 a World which abounds with so many  
 and such evident Marks of Wisdom and  
 Contrivance, should be made by Chance;  
 it is at least equally absurd to suppose,  
 that Chance should uphold and support  
 it in all that Order and Beauty with  
 which it still continues.

COULD we imagine it possible that  
 this regular System and Frame of Na-  
 ture was form'd by Chance; that an in-  
 finite Number of senseless Atoms, after  
 infinite Tryals and Rencontres, luckily  
 jump'd at last into this regular and beau-  
 tiful System of the World, (which is the  
 old and foolish Hypothesis of a famous  
 Sect;) yet how can we conceive that  
 the same Chance, which thus made the  
 World, should have kept it so long to-  
 gether in the same fix'd and settled Or-  
 der,

SERM. der, without any considerable Variation?

XII.

If it came together by Chance; it must be own'd the greatest Chance of all, that it has not long since been dissolv'd and broken in pieces; that the same Atoms which by one lucky Chance were thus joyned and compacted together, should not by another unlucky Chance be disjoyned again, and return again to their former Disorder and Confusion. For Chance is ever mutable and uncertain, and is as quick and ready to unmake as to make any thing.

BESIDES; we see that Nature does as it were decay and die every Year, and is as constantly reviv'd again. The Powers and Operations of Things here below, are lock'd up at certain Periods, and laid asleep, and then restor'd again to life, and the Face of the Earth renew'd. The several Seasons of the Year go on, and follow one another in a certain Round: Seed-time and Harvest, Day and Night, Summer and Winter, constantly succeed each other. Now that *Chance*, which keeps no Rule, nor observes any Order, should be so regular and constant as to do the same thing not only twice or thrice, but



but to repeat it often at certain Pe-  
riods of Time, and perform it just after  
the same Manner; is a plain Impos-  
sibility.

UNLESS therefore we can be so un-  
reasonable as to ascribe the most evident  
Marks of Wisdom and Contrivance, the  
greatest Instances of Design and Power, to  
a blind impotent *Chance*; we must ac-  
knowledge that the Creation and Preserva-  
tion of this World, are both of them the  
Work of an All-wise and All-powerful  
Being: since both of them are full of such  
amazing Instances of Wisdom and Power,  
that the Apostle might well say as he does,  
*That the invisible things of God from the* Rom. i. 20.  
*creation of the world are clearly seen, being*  
*understood by the things that are made; even*  
*his eternal power and Godhead.*

THE Beauty and Variety, the great  
Usefulness and wise Contrivance of all the  
Works of Nature, and every Part of the  
Creation, from the Heavens above, down  
to the Earth below; from the most ra-  
tional and intelligent Creature, to the  
meanest Plant or Insect; are an undeniable  
Proof that these Things could never be  
produc'd or preserv'd by blind *Chance*,  
or

SERM. or any contingent and fortuitous Cause;  
 XII. but must be the Effect of the Greatest  
 ~~~~~ Power and Unerring Counsel, the Work  
 of an Almighty Agent and most Complete
 Artificer; must at first have been
 created, and ever since supported and go-
 vern'd, by the same Most Wise and Pow-
 erful Being.

NAY, so far is *Chance* from being the
 Author of any one thing in the World,
 that nothing can be accounted for fully,
 ev'n from Natural Causes; but every the
 least Phenomenon must ultimately be re-
 solv'd into an Infinite and Invisible Power,
 and is a Proof of the Being and Providence
 of God. So that what our Saviour says,
 is true in the most literal sense, that a *spar-*
 row does not fall on the ground without our
 heavenly Father.

Mat. x. 29.

IF from the Material, we proceed to
 consider the Moral World; we shall find
 most evident Marks of an Over-ruling
 Providence interposing it self in the Affairs
 and Concerns of Men. That secret Prin-
 ciple call'd *Conscience*, which is interwoven
 in our Natures, and works so powerfully
 within us; which constantly applauds us
 for following the Rules of Religion and
 Virtue,

Virtue, and gives us such a Trust and SERM.
Confidence in God, as makes us fearless XII.

in the greatest Dangers; and as constantly condemns us for all base and wicked Actions, and fills us with such a Fear and Dread of God's avenging Justice, that we can never think our selves secure; but are apt to say to our selves, with guilty Cain, that *every one that findeth us will* Gen.iv.14. *slay us*: I say, All this is an undeniable Proof, that it is at least the common Apprehension of Mankind, that there is a Providence watching over us, and observing our Actions, and which will deal with us according to our Deserts.

AND whoever reflects upon the many unaccountable Turns and Revolutions in the World; what secret Plots and deep-laid Designs have been brought to light, and happily prevented; and, many times, at the point of execution; what private and barbarous Murders have been discovered by the most unlikely Means, and when they were almost forgot; and what Vengeance at last has overtaken the guilty Actors; how often Innocence and Virtue, which have been long injur'd and oppress'd, have been clear'd up and protected;

SERM. tested; while Villany and Injustice, which
 XII. have lain long conceal'd, and flourish'd
 greatly, have at last been detected, and
 receiv'd a just Recompence: Whoever re-
 flects upon these and innumerable such-
 like Occurrences, will find his Belief of
 a Providence well-grounded; and that 'tis
 impossible that Things should be under
 no Regulation, but left to blind Chance
 and Fortune.

FOR tho' the present Disorders in the
 World be confessedly many and great;
 yet, if the Management of Affairs were
 left wholly to blind Chance, or to the
 blind and furious Lusts and Passions of
 Men, they would be much more and
 greater than at present they are.

SO that it is owing to an Over-ruling
 Providence, which stilleth the Madness
 of the People, as well as the Raging of
 the Sea, and hath set Bounds to the one,
 as well as the other, and saith to both,
Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther;
 that the Wickedness of Men is under any
 Restraint, and the World is such a tole-
 rable Place as it is.

AS to the Reason which they who
 own and believe a God, assign for His
 leaving

leaving the Government of the World to **SERM.**
Chance, and not concerning himself about **XIII.**
it: It is so very weak, that it will scarce
bear the mentioning; much less does it
want any formal Confutation. They tell
us, that such an Attendance upon the
Works of Nature, and upon the Actions and
Affairs of Men, as Providence implies, is
both below the Majesty, and inconsistent
with the Happiness of God. That such
a multitude of Cares, and variety of Bu-
siness, as the Government of the World
necessarily draws after it; would interrupt
his Bliss, and diminish his Enjoyments.
That it would break in too-much upon
that perfect Rest and Ease, that Self-En-
joyment and full Contentment which the
Deity is possess'd of; and disturb ev'n the
Happiness of Heaven. That this World
and all that is transacted here, is infinite-
ly beneath the Notice of God; too mean
and inconsiderable, to merit the least de-
gree of his Care and Cognizance.

BUT what idle and foolish Reasoning
is this? Because we are so weak and ig-
norant as not to be able to attend long
upon any Business, or upon many things
at once, without being wearied and tired,
per-

SERM. perplex'd with Difficulties, and unable

XII. what to determine; Does it therefore

follow, that a Being of Infinite Wisdom and Almighty Power, who sees all things at one View, and can do all things by a Word of his Mouth, should be subject to

Isa. xl. 28. these Inconveniencies? *Hast thou not known, (says the Prophet,) hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. And since God did not think it beneath Him to Create this World, He cannot think it beneath him to take Care of it, and Govern it now it is Made. The same Goodness and Wisdom and Power which prompted and directed Him to Make these Things, will incline and enable him to Rule and Preside over Them. To which purpose the Author of the Book of Wisdom, thus Reasons; For thou, Lord, lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will? or been preserved, if not called by thee?*

Wisd. xi.
24, &c.

but

but thou sparest all: for they are thine, **SERM.**
O Lord, thou lover of souls. **XII.**

IF God be a Being of Infinite Goodness and Wisdom, Justice and Power, Purity and Holiness; He must needs observe and regard the Actions and Behaviour of Men, and concern himself in the Government of the World: He must reward those that diligently seek Him, and punish those who will not serve and obey Him: He must countenance and protect Piety and Virtue, and discourage Sin and Wickedness. And since this cannot be effectually done, without giving the World some present and immediate Proofs of it; without not only barely observing how Men behave themselves towards Him, but making some visible Distinction between them accordingly; we have all imaginable reason to believe the Scripture-Account of this Matter, which attributes all Events to GOD, and represents Him as actually interposing in Human Affairs, and ordering every thing that befalls us; so that there is nothing in the whole World exempt from the Care of his Providence. The greatest and most important Things, are not above his Power and Conduct; nor the

SERM. the least and most inconsiderable, below
 XII. his Notice ; but his Providence is in
 a general Manner exercis'd over all his
 Works, and in a more particular Manner
 employ'd about the Persons and Affairs of
 Men. Our Saviour tells us, that ev'n the
 hairs of our head are all of them numbred.
 And much more are the Days of our Lives,
 and the Welfare of our Persons, and the
 Success of our Actions, under the Care of
 Providence, and the Conduct of Heaven.

Mat. x.
30.

GOD will not cast off his faithful
 Servants, nor be unmindful of any of
 their Affairs ; but will make all things
 work together for good, to them that love
 Him. And none of us have any just Cause
 to say, upon this Account ; *What is the
 Almighty, that we should serve him ? &c.*

Rom. viii.
28.

AND thus I have fully Consider'd,
 and I hope as fully Answer'd those Ob-
 jections against Prayer, which suppose it
 a fruitless and unprofitable Work, and
 that 'tis impossible for us to reap any
 Benefit from it : Since there is neither
 any such Fate as excludes either God's
 Assistance, or our own Endeavours ; nor
 are Things left to blind Chance and For-
 tune,

tune, but are under the Care of a Wise and Good and Powerful Providence.

SERM.
XII.


II. I come now to Examine the *Second* Sort of Objections against *Prayer*, which suppose it to be a *needless* and *superfluous* Task ; since there is nothing which we can hope for from *Prayer*, but what we shall as certainly have without it. And these Objections, I intimated in my *First* Discourse, were grounded upon those Natural Notions which we have of *GOD*, as a Wise and Good, a Just and Powerful Being ; all which makes it wholly needless and superfluous to Pray unto Him. For he knows our Necessities before we ask, and is perfectly acquainted with all our Wants ; and will of Himself do whatever is best and fittest to be done. If he sees any thing needful or convenient for us, and we deserve it, he will give it us without our asking ; and if we have forfeited his Favour, and made our selves liable to Punishment, we cannot by any Prayer or Intercession avert his Judgments from us.

SERM.

XII.

Now in Answer to all such Objections as these, I will shew, *1st*, That *Prayer* is a strict and positive Duty ; an express Condition which God has required of us, and upon which he has suspended his Blessings. *2dly*, That whether we deserve any Favours from God or no, or whatever our Merits and Deserts may be ; there are very good Reasons why *Prayer* should be made a necessary Condition of our receiving any Blessings. *3dly*, That *Prayer* has a natural Tendency to qualify us for those Blessings which we ask of God ; and is in it self an admirable Means to make us better, and more deserving.

IF these Points can be made out, it is very evident that *Prayer* is not a needless and superfluous Task ; as these Objections suppose : but absolutely necessary, for obtaining a Supply of our Wants, and procuring those Blessings from God, which we have no grounds to hope for without *Prayer*.

1st, I say, That *Prayer* is a strict and positive Duty ; an express Condition which God has requir'd of us, and upon which God has suspended his Blessings.

T I S

'Tis true indeed, as long as we be-
have ourselves towards God as becomes
Creatures toward their Creator, we may
be assur'd that he will not be wanting
in any thing that is fit and necessary for
us. If we do our Duty as Children and
Creatures, He will perform the part of
a kind Father and merciful Creator: He
will feed and cloath us, and provide us
with all Things necessary to the obtain-
ing those Ends for which he design'd
us.

THIS in general we may be certain
of. But this does by no Means exclude
Prayer, or make it needless; because Prayer
is part of that Duty which we owe to
God. 'Tis a Natural piece of that Ho-
mage which is due to the Supreme Go-
vernour of the World, and Sovereign Dis-
poser of all Things. As GOD is the
Original and Undoubted Proprietor of
all Things; as He is the Giver of *every
good and perfect Gift*; so 'tis a Dictate of
Nature, to Pray to Him for whatever we
want.

It must be confess'd, that our First
Parents, while they continu'd in Paradise,
and retain'd their Integrity, had not that

SERM. Occasion for Prayer, That part of it I
 XII. mean which concerns Petition and beg-
 ing good Things of God ; which We have.
 They had all things by an Original Do-
 nation from God, and were not subject
 to those Wants and Infirmities with which
 We are encompass'd ; they had none of
 those Evils to deprecate, or good Things
 to ask, which We now have ; but were
 as Happy as they were Innocent.

BUT as soon as they had lost their
 Integrity, they forfeited the Divine Fa-
 vour ; and then God resum'd his Grant,
 and they became like one of us ; and
 Prayer, ev'n in the strict sense of Petition,
 was what they stood as much oblig'd to as
 we. It then grew to be as Necessary as
 'tis now ; and was accordingly, as has been
 shewn, the constant Practice of all Na-
 tions ; who as they expected no Assistance
 or Success but from God, so they always
 implor'd his Favour in every Underta-
 king, and petition'd him for every thing
 they wanted.

WE do not indeed find any express
 positive Precept for this Duty in the
Jewish Law ; because both the Reason of
 it, and our Obligations to it, are evident
 by

by the Light of Nature ; and therefore SERM.
XII.
we find it practis'd by all devout Men under that Dispensation. And the Tem-

ple which Solomon built for the Worship and Service of God, is expressly call'd the *House of Prayer*. But we meet with several Precepts of this kind, in the Prophets, and particularly in the Book of *Psalms* ; where there is no Duty more frequently commanded, more earnestly inculcated, and which has greater Promises made to it, and has had more Effect. O

thou that hearest Prayer, unto thee shall Psal. lxxv. 2.

all Flesh come. For thou, Lord, art good — lxxxvi.

and gracious ; and of great Mercy unto 5, 7.

all them that call upon thee. In the time

of my Trouble I will call upon thee : for

thou hearest me. And again ; The Lord — cxlv.

is nigh unto all them that call upon him : — 18, 19.

yea, all such as call upon him faithfully.

He will fulfil the desire of them that fear

him : he also will bear their cry, and will

help them. And still more expressly, in

the 50th Psalm, ver. 15. Call upon me in

the time of trouble : so will I hear thee,

and thou shalt praise me.

IN the New Testament, the Command

is much fuller and clearer. Our Saviour

SERM. was remarkably frequent in the Practice
 XII. of this great Duty ; and often enjoins it
 to his Followers, with Promises of Success. Nothing can be plainer than those words in the 7th of *St. Matthew*, ver. 7, 8. *Ask, and it shall be given unto you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth : and he that seeketh, findeth : and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* He prescribes several Rules for the right Performance of this Duty ; and, at the Request of his Disciples, has given us a complete Form of Words, in which we are to address our selves to God.

THE Apostles also, in their Writings, do frequently exhort Men to this Duty ; and have left upon Record several Precepts and Directions concerning it : All which are so well known, that they need not be particularly mention'd. So that, upon the Whole, this Duty of Prayer has as good a Foundation in the *Word of God*, as any other part of Religion. He has fully declar'd it to be his Will, that Men should call upon him ; and has as fully promis'd to hear those who do so. He has made it an exprefs Condition of
 our

our receiving those Blessings from Him which we want; and That is sufficient to lay an Obligation upon us. It ought to be enough to convince us that we are bound to pray to God; to shew that he has commanded it; without assigning any other Reason. But to carry this Matter further, I will shew, in the 2^d place,

SERM.
XII.

2^{dly}, THAT whether we deserve any Favours from God or no, or whatever our Merits and Deserts may be, there are very good Reasons why Prayer should be made a necessary Condition of our receiving any Blessings.

THO' God be infinitely Wise and Good, and will always do what is best and fittest to be done; yet he may justly with-hold his Blessings from those who will not ask them, however they may want or deserve them: For this is not inconsistent either with his Wisdom or his Goodness.

DOES any good Man think himself oblig'd, tho' he knows our Wants, to supply them without our asking; when he has given us his Word, that he will grant any reasonable Request which we make?

SERM. Is not this a Natural Debt, and a just
 XII. Acknowledgement which all Superiors
 expect from their Dependants? Was it
 ever look'd upon as a Diminution of any
 Man's Goodness, not to give unless he
 were first ask'd; especially when 'tis known,
 that what is wanted, may be had up-
 on these Terms? And is it not general-
 ly esteemed a piece of Pride, and an In-
 stance of a haughty Spirit, to refuse to
 ask; and, upon that account, a just reason
 not to give?

'Tis true, good Men do many good
 Offices unask'd, as well as unthank'd; and
 so does God too. But in general, This
 is a Condition which Benefactors require
 of their Beneficiaries; Masters expect it
 of their Servants, Parents from their Chil-
 dren, and a Prince from his Subjects; and
 will see their Wants, and let them feel
 them, 'till they think fit to ask for a Sup-
 ply. And why may not a Wise and Good
 God require That of his Creatures, which
 all wise and good Men expect from those
 who have any Dependance upon them?
 Nay, the Reason is much stronger, as we
 owe infinitely more to God, and are more
 at his Disposal.

IF we esteem it a natural piece of Justice, and a necessary sort of Reparation, to acknowledge any Offence we have committed against Man, and express our Sorrow to him for it; tho' he knows already what we have done, and is willing to forgive us: It is much more fitting and becoming us, to confess our Sins to God, and bewail our own Unworthiness; tho' he needs no Information of this kind: And he may justly refuse to pardon us, if we refuse to joyn in these Acts of Submission and Humiliation.

IN like manner 'tis very fit in itself, and highly becoming the great Governor of the World, to make Prayer the necessary Condition of our receiving those Things we want; tho' he knows our Wants, and is of himself dispos'd to give us more than we desire or deserve: That his Power and Providence may be universally own'd and acknowledg'd by Mankind; that we may live in a constant Dependance upon him, and own that the *Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof*; and all that we receive, is his Gift; that we may testify after the best manner we are able, our Faith and Affiance,
our

SERM.
XII.

our Trust and Confidence in his Goodness, and express the deep Sense we have of our own Wants, and Weakness, and Unworthiness; that we may learn to set a just Value upon God's Blessings and Favours; that we may abuse none of his Mercies, but employ all that he gives us to worthy Ends and Purposes, to his Glory and the Benefit of our selves and others. These, and many other which might be assign'd, are wise Reasons why God should make Prayer the necessary Condition of our receiving what we want, and not give us any thing without asking. These are some of those excellent Ends which Prayer serves to, and which could not at all, or at least not so well be obtain'd without Prayer: And therefore we cannot look upon Prayer to be a needless and superfluous Task, and that there is nothing which we can hope for from it, but we shall as well have without it; since God has made it the express Condition of receiving his Blessings, and there are such wise Reasons for his so doing. But I proceed,

3dly, To

3dly, To that which is the principal Thing to be consider'd in this Matter, and which will fully shew that *Prayer* is no needless and superfluous Work; viz. that *Prayer* has a natural Tendency to qualify us for those Blessings which we ask of God, and is in it self an admirable Means to make us better and more-deserving.

THE Sum and Force of those Objections against *Prayer*, which I am now considering, may be reduc'd to This; that God will of Himself do Good to good Men: and if we make our selves worthy of his Blessings, we shall certainly have them without Praying at all; and if we be *not* worthy, 'tis not in our Power, by any Prayers we can make, to procure them. So that, either way, *Prayer* is altogether needless and superfluous.

NOW in Answer to This, I have already shewn, that God has, for wise Reasons, made *Prayer* an exprefs Condition of receiving good Things from Him: So that no Qualifications whatever, without *Prayer*, can entitle us to his Favour. Nay, we cannot be good Men, if we refuse to comply

SERM. ply with so plain a Command. To this
 XII. I further add, that *Prayer* will qualify
 us for God's Blessings; as it tends to im-
 prove us, and make us better.

THIS is evident from the Nature of *Prayer*, which consists in the most intense Acts of the Mind, and the closest Application of our Thoughts to God: In setting before us his Infinite Majesty and Power, his Purity and Holiness, and all the adorable Perfections of his Nature: In paying all those Acknowledgments to Him, which are due from Creatures to their Great Creator: In expressing the Sense we have of our Dependance upon Him, and our Obligations to Him: In confessing our Sins, and being deeply affected and humbled at the thoughts of our own Unworthiness: In earnestly imploring his Pardon and Forgiveness, and making the most serious and solemn Vows of future Amendment and Obedience: In Praising Him for his daily Blessings; for all his Mercies to us, both ordinary and extraordinary; those which we enjoy in common with the rest of Mankind, and those which are peculiar to our selves: In begging of Him to supply our Wants, and prosper all our lawful

Under-

Undertakings: In recommending our selves, and all our Concerns, our Friends in particular, and all Mankind in general, to the Care of his Providence; and, in every thing, submitting our own Wills to his: In *seeking his Face*, and looking up to Him for the Assistance of his holy Spirit, to comfort us in all our Troubles, and strengthen us in all Temptations, and enable us to perform those Conditions which he has required of us; that we may be admitted into that State of endless Bliss and Happiness which He has promis'd us in Another World, whenever it shall please Him to call us out of This.

IN these and such-like Acts does this Duty of *Prayer* consist. Now 'tis evident that this Duty seriously and frequently perform'd, must needs have a very good Effect upon us. Tho' our Prayers do not work any real Change and Alteration in God, yet they will work a considerable Change and Alteration in us for the better. Which is a sufficient Reason why God should enjoin us to Pray; and why we should not look upon it as a needless and superfluous Task: Since if we rightly

per-

SERM.² perform this Duty, we shall reap no small
 XII. Benefit from it.

WHEN we present our selves before God in Prayer, and exercise those several Acts of Devotion which I have just now mention'd; When God is thus set before us, and we are before Him in this manner; All the great Truths of Religion will be awaken'd in us, and made present to our Thoughts. We shall have a lively Sense of God's Authority over us, and his Eye upon us; of the Laws he has set us; of our Sins, and our Duties; and of the Account we must give of all that we do, and the just Recompence we shall receive for it.

AND this will fix upon our Minds just Impressions of the Guilt and Heinousness of Sin, and be an effectual Means both to humble and reform us for the future. It will fill us with a just Shame and deep Remorse for what is past, and put us upon the firmest Vows and Resolutions of avoiding the like for the time to come.

WHEN we come to pray to God for his Assistance and Protection, and commit ourselves and our Affairs to his Conduct and Direction,

Direction, and remember withal what it **SERM.**
is that will most effectually recommend us **XII.**
to his Favour; This will put us upon a
vigorous pursuit after Piety and Virtue,
keep us steady in our Obedience, and
make us industrious to avoid all those
things which we know to be offensive to
God.

WHEN we express the grateful sense
we have of God's Mercies, and set our-
selves to recollect all the Instances of his
his Loving-kindness to us, and return Him
that just Tribute of Praise and Thankf-
giving; This will naturally inflame us
with a Love of God, inspire us with a
Zeal for his Honour, and prove a power-
full Motive *to walk worthy of the Lord
unto all well-pleasing, and be fruitful in
every good work.*

THUS does Prayer, in every part of
it, tend to cultivate and improve the Prin-
ciples of Piety and Virtue, and sow the
Seeds of Religious Dispositions in us. And
if this Duty was constantly perform'd at
Set-Times, and with due Application, it
would conduce very much to our spiri-
tual Improvement, and make us grow in
every Grace: For we see it has a natural
Ten-

SERM. Tendency to fix our Thoughts upon the
 XII. great Truths of Religion, and affect us
 deeply with them.

NOR is there any thing which would lay a more effectual Restraint upon our unruly Lusts and Passions, and keep us from Sin; than the frequent Practice of this Duty. For if we accustom ourselves at certain Set-Times to make Confession of our Sins to God, and implore his Pardon; This will in a great measure restrain us from adding to their Number. For we shall not easily prevail with ourselves to do any thing, which we must, as soon almost as 'tis done, confess to be a Fault, and solemnly repent of it before God. This is such an Addition to the Folly and Unreasonableness of every Sinful Action, as will make it much more difficult to bring our selves to consent to it.

IN like manner, if we made it our constant Practice to address ourselves to God for his Assistance and Succour in every thing we set about; This would keep our Hearts and our Hands from any wicked and unlawful Enterprize. We should then never dare to attempt any thing for which we dare not pray, and
 in

in which we knew God would never bless us. SERM.
XII.

BUT I have not Time to enlarge any further upon this Subject. 'Tis evident from what has been already said, that the Duty of Prayer, when rightly and frequently perform'd, has a very great and good Influence upon us, and tends very much to promote and establish in us a Christian-life ; to make us better Men, more and more such as God would have us, and consequently more deserving of his Favour.

AND I am apt to suspect, that those Men who abstain from this Duty of *Prayer*, and pretend those Objections, which I have been examining, in their Excuse ; do not really believe what they pretend : That they do not neglect their Prayers because they do not believe that God can or will hear and help them, or that 'tis vain and unprofitable to pray unto him ; because they think that God has no regard to what passes here below, but leaves all things to blind *Chance* and *Fortune* ; or lastly, because they are of opinion that there is no manner of occasion to pray to God, and that he will supply our Wants

SERM. without our asking or seeking : I say, I
 XII. do not believe that Men abstain from
 Prayer upon any of these Accounts, but
 because they know not how to reconcile
 their Prayers with those Sins which they
 love, and have not the Heart to
 leave. For, as the wise Son of Sirach re-
 marks, *He that washeth himself after the*
 Ecclus. touching of a dead Body, if he touch it
 xxxiv. 25, again, what availeth his washing ? So is
 26. it with a Man that fasteth for his Sins,
 and goeth again and doth the same :
 Who will hear his Prayer ? or what doth
 his humbling profit him ? They are sen-
 sible of the religious Nature and Influence
 of Prayer, and how inconsistent it is with
 those wicked Courses they are engag'd in,
 and what a Restraint it would lay upon
 their beloved Lusts ; and therefore they are
 asham'd and afraid to pray against those
 Sins which they have no mind to forsake,
 or for those Spiritual Blessings which they
 have not a Will to make use of.

BUT as for those whose sincere Desire
 and Endeavour it is to serve and please
 God, and become every Day better and
 more deserving of his Favour ; they will
 find the great Benefit of constant and fe-
 rious

rious Prayer; and how much it contributes to this End; which, with those other Advantages we may reasonably hope to reap from it, is sufficient to induce us to the frequent Practice of it. For there is no Fate or Destiny, which we should dread: These are the Fears of the Superstitious, and the Refuge of the Profane. There is no such Thing as blind Chance or Fortune; but a Wise and Good Providence governs the World. And as God has commanded us to pray to Him, so he will hear our Prayers, and grant the Requests of those who diligently serve him.

SERM.
XII.



M A T. xix. 17.

*If thou wilt enter into Life,
keep the Commandments.*

Preach'd before the KING, PRINCE,
and PRINCESS, at *Kensington*.



THESE Words contain our **SERM.**
Saviour's Answer to a very **XIII.**
important Question, which we find put to him in the foregoing Verse ; *Behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have Eternal Life ?* The Person who made this Enquiry, was, as St. *Luke* informs us, a Ruler, i. e. one of the Students and Luk. xviii. Interpreters of the Law of *Moses* ; who ^{18.}

SERM. hearing of our Saviour's Fame, and the
 XIII. high Character which he assum'd, of the
Messiah sent from God to instruct Men
 in the right way to Happiness; came, as
 seems most likely, with a sincere Desire
 of being resolv'd in this important Que-
 stion; and not out of Curiosity, or some
 worse Principle, as many others did; For
 St. Mark tells us, that *Jesus beholding*
him, loved him.

Mark x.
 21.

THE Meaning of the Question was;
 What would recommend him to the Fa-
 vour of God, and upon what Terms he
 might hope for Happiness in another
 Life? The Person who ask'd our Lord
 this Question was a *Jew*, one who ad-
 hered to the Law of *Moses*. Our Lord's
 Answer turns upon this; and refers to the
 great Precepts of the Law of *Moses*, and
 not peculiarly to that Religion which He
 and His Apostles were shortly to estab-
 lish in the World. To understand this,
 we must take Notice that this Person asks
 our Saviour what he must do to be admitted
 effectually into the Kingdom of the *Messiah*,
 so as to obtain that Eternal Life and Happi-
 ness which He was to confer upon his Fol-
 lowers? For the *Jews* believed, that when
 the

the *Messiah* came, those of their Nation who receiv'd him should not die; but that they, with those who being dead should then be rais'd again by him, should enjoy Eternal Life with him. Our Saviour, in Answer to this Demand, tells him, that to obtain the Eternal Life of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, he must *keep the Commandments*: And then, enumerating several Precepts of the Law, the Young Man tells him that he had *kept all these from his Youth up*, and ask'd what farther Instructions he had for him; *what lack I yet?* To which our Saviour answer'd, that these were the necessary Duties which God had made the indispensable Conditions of Life: But if he aim'd at a great degree of Perfection, and would do something excellent and extraordinary, then he must *sell all his Estate, and give it to the Poor, and follow him* through Poverty and Afflictions; and laying aside all Worldly Affairs, apply himself wholly to the Preaching of the Gospel; and that then he should have an extraordinary Degree of Reward in Heaven.

So that it does not appear but the Young Man might have done well, if he

SERM. had gone away satisfied with Christ's first

XIII. Answer. For our Saviour does not seem
 to have bidden him sell his Estate, as a
 thing absolutely Necessary to his being
 a good Christian; but only as a thing
 Necessary, at that time, to his being a
 Preacher of the Gospel; or as a Reproof
 of his Confidence, and a Tryal whether
 in earnest he believ'd him to be the
Messiah, and resolv'd to obey Him as
 such; or else our Lord did it to take
 an occasion to represent to his Disci-
 ples, the great Danger and Mischief of
 the love of Riches. Yet our Saviour's
 Answer will hold good, and direct all
 Christians in the right way to Eternal
 Life and Happiness. For the Duties
 which our Saviour here recommends to
 our exact Observance, are so comprehen-
 sive, that they include all that is good
 in any Religion in the World, and all
 that can possibly render us acceptable to
 God.

THE constant Practice of the Duties
 of the Second Table, out of Love to God,
 and in Obedience to his Commands; is
 what God principally requires of us, in
 order to our Acceptance and Justification:

And

And whatever else he has enjoyn'd us, is only by way of Sanction and Enforcement of these great Duties, or as Means for the obtaining this excellent End. SERM. XIII.

WE find our Saviour giving the same Answer to the Lawyer who came to Him with the very same Question, to make tryal of his Knowledge and Judgment, and to observe whether he would teach any thing contrary to the Law. He had heard our Saviour discoursing about Eternal Life, and therefore ask'd Him what was the main and principal Thing by which a Man might attain it. *Master, Luke x. what shall I do, to inherit Eternal Life?* ^{25.}

To which our Saviour answer'd, by asking him what the Law of Moses had determin'd in the Case; what was There propos'd as the Condition of Life and Happiness? *What is written in the Law? How readeſt thou?* And he answering, said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind, and thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* To which our Saviour reply'd, *Thou haſt answered right: This do, and thou ſhalt live. i. e. Do but fulfil theſe Conditions;*
expresſ

SERM. express your Love to God, by an Affec-
 XIII. tionate, Sincere, Constant, and Universal
 Obedience to His Commands; and testi-
 fy your Love to your Neighbour, by do-
 ing as you would be done by; and you
 shall inherit Eternal Life.

Mat. xxii.
 35.

To the same Purpose is our Saviour's
 Answer to another Question, which had
 much the same Meaning with this; *Ma-
 ster, which is the great Commandment of the
 Law?* Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt
 love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
 and with all thy soul, and with all thy
 mind. This is the first, and great com-
 mandment. And the second is like unto it,
 Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.
 On these two commandments hang all the
 Law and the Prophets. These are the
 two great Rules which contain the whole
 Sum of True Religion and Righteousness:
 These are what Nature, and the Reason
 of Things teach: And these are what
 all God's Revelations to Mankind in the
 Law and the Prophets, are design'd to
 explain and enforce.*

IN another place, upon a like Occa-
 sion, we find our Saviour giving these
 Commandments the Preference to all posi-
 tive

tive Institutions whatever, *There is no* SERM.
other commandment greater than these; and XIII.
 highly approves the discreet Answer which
 the Scribe made, *That to love God with*
all the heart, and with all the understand-
ing, and with all the soul, and with all
the strength; and to love our neighbour as
ourselves; is more than all whole Burnt-
Offerings and Sacrifices; is a more accep-
 table Service to God, than all the Offer-
 ings and Sacrifices in the World. And
 when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly,
 He said unto him, *Thou art not far from*
the Kingdom of God: You do not want
 much, of being a True and Perfect Chri-
 stian; Keep and persist in this Disposition
 of Mind, and you are well-fitted to re-
 ceive the Gospel; to be a True Member
 of the Church of God on Earth, and of
 his Kingdom hereafter in Heaven.

THESE are the chief Places which
 refer to the Text now before us; where
 we have mark'd out to us by our Blessed
 Saviour, the standing and ordinary Way
 to Eternal Happiness. *If thou wilt enter*
into Life, keep the Commandments. These
 are the Terms, and this the Condition of
 our everlasting Well-being.

I shall

SERM. I shall *first* explain and illustrate this
 XIII. Condition, and *then* make some further
 Use and Improvement of it.

By the *Commandments*, we are here to understand those *Laws* which God has given us for the Government of our *Lives* and *Actions*; and which he has expressly reveal'd to us from *Heaven*, by his *Servants* the *Prophets*, or by his *Son* and his *Apostles*.

THERE is indeed a *Law of Nature*, which if Men had carefully kept to, they had wanted no other. But since they neglected and defac'd This *Law*, it pleas'd God to make a new *Discovery* of his *Will*, by an express *Revelation*; and 'tis in This *Revelation* that we are now to look for those *Commands*, which we must *keep*, if we would enter into *Life*.

OUR Saviour, we see, sends the *Jew* who enquir'd what these *Commandments* were, to the *Law of Moses*; and refers him to that *Revelation* which God made by him to the *Jewish People*. And if a *Christian* would be resolv'd in this *Enquiry*, he must have recourse to that *Revelation* wherein God has in these last days spoken to us by his *Son*. 'Tis He that bath the
 Words

Words of Eternal Life. 'Tis from His SERM.
 Preachings, and the Writings of His A- XIII.
 postles, that *Christians* must learn what
 is *that good, and acceptable, and perfect*
Will of God; by complying with which
 they shall be sav'd. 'Tis *there*, and not
 in the *Traditions and Doctrines of Men*,
 that they must find those *Command-*
ments; the keeping of which, will give
 them *an Entrance into Life*. And these
 are so plainly laid down, that no sincere
 and honest Enquirer can miss of finding
 them. For, this Enquiry plainly concerns
 Matter of Fact only; and the Solution of
 it requires neither Logick, nor Metaphy-
 sicks, nor any other Scholastick Arts. It
 needs no Subtilty of Judgment, nor Cun-
 ning in Dispute; nor any other Qualifica-
 tion of Mind, but Care and Honesty. It
 does not send us to many or great Vo-
 lumes, but to our Bible; *What is writ-*
ten in the Law? How readeſt thou? 'Tis
 There that we have a faithful Record of
 whatever is necessary to Salvation.

THE great Duties of *Sobriety, Righ-*
teousness, and Godliness. The Prohibition
 of all *Ungodliness, and Unrighteousness*;
 of Intemperance and Uncleaness; of Pride
 and

SERM. and Covetousness, of Fraud and Injustice;
 XIII of Perjury, Lying, and Dissimulation; of
 ~~~~~ Uncharitableness and Hatred; of Cruelty  
 and Oppression: And the strict Injunction  
 of Sobriety and Chastity, Humility and  
 Contentedness; of Truth, Justice, and Fi-  
 delity; of universal Love and Charity: I  
 say, all these Commands are so plainly laid  
 down in the *New Testament*, that Persons  
 of the meanest Capacities may know their  
 Duty.

AND These, our Saviour tells us, are  
*the standing Rule of Life*, which will  
 bring us to *Heaven*. The strict Obser-  
 vance and constant Performance of *these*,  
 is universally and indispensably necessary;  
 and 'tis a vain thing for him who lives  
 in the breach and transgression of *them*,  
 to think of *entering into Life*. We may  
 as well imagine to obtain the *End* with-  
 out the *Means*, or to come to a Place by  
 going the quite contrary Way; as to ex-  
 pect Heaven and Happiness, when we  
 neglect the Commandments of God. For  
*the keeping of these*, is constantly made  
 the express Terms and Conditions of our  
 Admission into Heaven: *If thou wilt en-  
 ter into Life, keep the Commandments.*

THIS

THIS Condition is, in the plain Nature and Reason of the Thing, as necessary now under the Gospel, as it was under the Law of Moses; or in a State of Nature, when Men had nothing but the Light of Reason and Natural Conscience to direct them. Doing the Will of God, and obeying his Commandments, always was and always will be the way to recommend our selves to his Favour and Acceptance. Now This is the Will of God, ev'n our Sanctification. The Commandment is holy, just, and good; and relates to the Conduct of our Lives and Actions, in the Ways of Righteousness. This Eternal Law of Universal Right, is so agreeable to the Purity of God's Nature, and the Constitution of Man as he is a reasonable Creature; that the Duties arising from it, are of perpetual Obligation: Nor can any Rule or Precept belonging to it be taken away or dispens'd with, without changing the Nature of Things, overturning the Measures of Right and Wrong, and thereby introducing and authorizing Irregularity, Confusion, and Disorder in the World. And we may be sure that Christ's Coming into the World, was not for such an End



SERM. as this; but, on the contrary, to reform  
 XIII. the corrupt State of degenerate Man; and,  
 ~~~~~ out of Those who would mend their Lives  
 and bring forth fruit meet for repentance,
 to erect a New Kingdom, to purify unto
 himself a holy nation, a peculiar people,
 zealous of good works.

HENCE it is that we find such an
 admirable Harmony and Agreement, as to
 these great Points, between the Gospel of
 our Saviour, the Law of Moses, and the
 Dictates of pure uncorrupted Reason.
 Those Virtues which were always had in
 great Esteem by the wiser and sober part
 of the Heathen World, are those very
 Points upon which the greatest Stress is
 laid by Moses and the Prophets. *He hath*
shewed thee, O man, what is good: And
what doth the Lord thy God require of
thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and
to walk humbly with thy God? Upon these
 also the greatest Stress is always laid by
 our Saviour in his Gospel, and by the
 Apostles in their Writings.

THE Laws which our Saviour has
 given us, and which he requires us to
 obey, that we may be Partakers with
 Him in his Kingdom of Glory; do chiefly
 and

and principally relate to such Duties as these. These he repeats over and over again, in different Places and sundry Expressions, to put the Matter past all Doubt and Controversy.

SERM.
XIII.
~

HE began his Preaching, with a Command to *Repent*; which must be a Repentance for Mens Transgressions of *these* Commands: for as yet He had given them no other. He bids his Disciples to be Exemplary in good Works. And in his Sermon upon the Mount, he confirms and at once reinforces all the Moral Precepts in the Old Testament. He tells his Hearers, that *except their Righteousness, i. e. their Performance of the Eternal Law of Right, shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And then he goes on to make good what He had before said, that He was come to *fulfil the Law*; which he does, by giving all the Commands and Precepts of it their full and clear Sense, free from the corrupt and loose Glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees.

AND to show how much He is in Earnest, and expects Obedience to these

SERM. Commandments; He tells them, that if
XIII. *they obey, great shall be their Reward.*

Luke vi.
35.

They shall be called the Sons of the most Highest. And in the Conclusion, He adds this solemn Sanction to what He had said; Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 'Tis in vain for you to take me for the Messiah your King, unless you obey me. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. To such disobedient Subjects, tho' they have prophesied and done Miracles in my Name, I shall say at the Day of Judgment, Depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity, I know you not.

Mat. xii.
49, 50.

WHEN he was told, that his Mother and his Brethren sought to speak with him; stretching out his Hands to his Disciples, he said, *Behold my mother, and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* From whence 'tis evident, that in His Account of the Matter, they could not be Children of the Adoption, and Fellow-Heirs with him of Eternal Life, who

who did not do the Will of his Heavenly Father, and keep his Commandments. SERM. XIII.

IN the 19th of St. Luke, ver. 14. where our Saviour takes Notice of the Jews not receiving him as the *Messiah*; he expresses it thus; *We will not have this Man to reign over us.* From whence 'tis plain, that 'tis not enough for our Admittance into his Kingdom, to believe him to be the *Messiah*; unless we also keep his Commandments, and take him to be our King to reign over us.

THE Love of Christ is certainly necessary to our Entrance into that Happiness, which, out of Love to us, he has purchas'd for us with his own Blood; and which we cannot suppose he will bestow upon any, who will not make him a Return of their Love. For in the 14th of St. John, ver. 15. he thus addresses himself to us, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments.* And again, at the 21st Verse, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest my self to him.* And, *If a Man loveth me, he will* ver. 23,

SERM. *keep my Words. ver. 24, He that loveth me*
 XIII. *not, keepeth not my Sayings.*

THIS is the Tenor of our Saviour's Preaching. From which it appears, that 'tis upon Mens Obedience or Disobedience to his Laws, upon their keeping or transgressing his Commandments, that their future Happiness or Misery depends. The *Wicked or Disobedient shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous or obedient into life eternal.*

IF we proceed in this Enquiry, and examine what Answer the Apostles return'd to this important Question, *What shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?* we shall meet with the same Answer.

THIS, as has already been observ'd, is plain from that Repentance which the Apostles so frequently press upon their Hearers, in order to their embracing the Gospel. Thus St. Peter, in his first Sermon, when they were prick'd in their Heart, and ask'd, *What shall we do?* says, *Repent, and be baptiz'd, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. i. e. Repent of your Transgressions of the Commandments of God, and keep them*

Act. ii. 38.

them for the future. This is that, upon SERM.
 which your Salvation depends. The same XIII.
 he says to them again in his next Speech; 
Unto you first, God having raised up his Act. iii. 26.
Son Jesus, sent him to bless you. And how
 this was done, the next Words declare,
in turning away every one of you from his
iniquities; or, in other words, in assist-
 ing and enabling you to *keep God's Com-*
mandments.

WHEN *Felix* sent for *Paul*, that he
 and his Wife *Drusilla* might hear him con-
 cerning the *Faith in Christ*; the Apostle
 reasoned of *Righteousness* or *Justice*, and
Temperance, the great Duties which we
 owe to others and our selves; and of the
Judgment to come; 'till he made *Felix* to
 tremble, *Acts* xxiv. 24. Whereby it ap-
 pears that *Temperance* and *Justice*, which
 are plain Moral Duties, were fundamental
 parts of the Religion which *St. Paul* pro-
 fess'd, and were contain'd in that *Faith*
 which he preached. And if we do not
 find him every-where pressing the Com-
 mandments of the Moral Law; we must
 remember, that most of his Discourses left
 upon Record, were preach'd to the *Jews* in
 their Synagogues; who acknowledg'd

SERM. their Obedience due to all the Commands
 XIII. of the Law, and would have taken it ill
 to have been suspected not to have been
 more zealous for Them than He.

THUS we see, by the Preaching of our Saviour and his Apostles, that He requir'd of those who believ'd Him to be the *Messiah*, and receiv'd Him for their Lord and Master, that they should live by his Laws ; and that He will own none to be his, nor receive them as true Denizons of the *New Jerusalem* into the Inheritance of Eternal Life, but leave them to the Condemnation of the Unrighteous, who have not lived in a sincere Obedience to his Commandments. The *Workers of iniquity*, they that *have done evil*, i. e. the Transgressors of the Laws of God, are those who shall be judg'd and condemn'd to Death ; And the *Workers of righteousness*, they who *have done good*, who have walk'd in and kept the Commandments of God, are those who shall be receiv'd into Life Eternal, when *Christ* shall come at last to render to every one according to what he hath done in the flesh, sitting upon his great and glorious Tribunal, at the End of the World,

FROM

FROM what has been said, we may learn, SERM.
XIII.

1st. THE great Folly and Danger of trusting to External Performances, and the Instrumental part of Religion, for our Salvation.

AND yet this is an Error which has always prevail'd in the World ; and which, 'tis to be fear'd, many do still live and die in. Men are apt to think that the bare Belief and outward Profession of Religion, together with a constant Compliance with all the Forms and Modes of divine Worship, and an exact Observance of all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church whereof they are Members, especially if they are zealous for those Things, will effectually secure their Salvation.

BUT tho' these things are good, yet they are so only in order to a further End ; And if by the Use of them, we do not attain that End, they are good for nothing, and will do us no good. And therefore we never find the Promise of Eternal Life, annex'd to any of these performances. 'Tis constantly made the Re-

SERM. ward of Virtue, and a good Life. 'Tis
 XIII. *to them, and them only, who by patient
 continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory,
 and Honour, and Immortality; that God
 will give Eternal Life. And Tribulation
 and Anguish, Indignation and Wrath, shall
 be upon every Soul that doth evil, whether
 Jew, or Gentile, or Christian; whatever
 Sect or Perswasion or Denomination he
 is of.*

MEN indeed will be differently dealt
 with according to the different Dispensations they have been under, and the different Means and Opportunities they have had of Improvement; but there will be no Dispensation for Voluntary Sin and Wickedness. No Church or Religion, no Profession or Perswasion whatever, can give us this Privilege, and exempt us from keeping the Commandments of God. The Rule is general, and without exception, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* 'Tis no-where said, *If thou wilt enter into Life, make profession of such a particular Belief; join your selves to such an Assembly; observe such and such Forms and Modes of Worship; But, Keep the Commandments of God.*

NOT that Men are to be Indifferent SERM.
 what they believe ; because a right Belief XIII.
 is most likely to produce a right Pra-
 ctice. Nor that Men should be Careless
 in the Publick Worship and Service of God,
 and not mind what Sacrifice they offer to
 Him ; because these Things, when duly
 and regularly done, will have a good
 Influence upon our Lives and Actions ; and
 the Duties which we perform in God's
 House, will regulate our Conduct at other
 Times and Places. And if these Things
 have this Effect ; if we *add to our Faith,*
Virtue ; and our Zeal for God's Honour
 and Glory and the Purity of his Worship,
 expresses it self in an uniform Obedience
 to his Commands ; our Religion is then
 such as it should be, and will not fail of
 recommending us to God. So St. James
 tells us, that our using the Christian Do-
 ctrine, as a Rule of Action ; and being *not*
a forgetful Hearer, but a Doer of the Work
therein enjoin'd us ; will render us blessed
in our Deeds ; Jam. 1. 25. But without
 this, our Religion, be it what it will, is
 vain ; and all the Zeal we express for it, is
 to no Purpose. For what the Apostle says
 concerning the Controversy in his time,
 about

SEAM. about the Necessity of Circumcision, is applicable to all Religious Disputes; what-
 XIII. ever; *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the Commandments of God, 1 Cor. 7. 19.* This is the main and principal Thing we are to regard.

BUT because there is a real Difficulty in this, and in many Cases it will put us to considerable Pains and Trouble; Men had rather employ themselves in easier Performances; in the Externals and Circumstantials of Religion; in observing Times and Seasons, and Days and Months and Years; and complying with Human Ordinances and Injunctions. All which, is very commendable and useful; but not when we place Religion in it, and prefer it before *keeping the Commandments of God, before the weightier Things of the Law, Justice, Mercy and Truth.* These ought to be done in the first place, tho' the other ought not to be left undone. There is as much difference between Outward Conformity to these Things and True Religion, as there is between the easiest and the hardest thing in the World. There is nothing easier than to make an Outward Profession

Profession of Religion in Words, and to comply with all the Externals of it ; nothing harder, than to subdue the Heart, and to bring Thoughts and Deeds into Obedience of the Truth. The latter is indispensably necessary to True Religion : The former may be practis'd by Those who have no Religion at all.

SERM.
XIII.

2. HENCE therefore, in the *second* place, we may gather a probable Reason why our Saviour, in his Answer to this Question of the Young-Man's, *What he must do, that he might have Eternal Life* ; repeats the whole *Second Table*, and omits the *First* : viz. because the *Jews*, in his time, were, and, as he foresaw, *Christians* afterwards would be, more negligent of the *Second Table* than of the *First*. They were very exact and scrupulous in the Outward Performance of their Duty to God, but had little or no regard of their Duty towards Men. They made an open Profession of their Observance of the *First Commandment*, of having *but one God* ; and wore it about them upon their Phylacteries. They were strict Observers of the *Second*, and had *Idols* in great abhorrence. They were very

SERM. very cautious of the Letter of the *Third*
 XIII. Command, and did not apply the Name
 of *God* to a Falshood ; tho' they swore by
 other Things which had such a relation
 to *God*, as amounted to swearing by his
 Name. And then as to the *Sabbath*, they
 kept it more strictly than *God* Himself
 ever intended ; infomuch that they charg'd
 our Blessed *Saviour* with breaking the
Sabbath, because He wrought some of his
 Miracles of Love and Mercy on that
 Day.

THUS far these Hypocrites went ; and
 thus far any One may go, and have as
 little Religion as They ; for there is no
 Difficulty in all this. The greatest Diffi-
 culty lies in keeping the Commands of
 the *Second* Table, because they thwart
 our corrupt Passions and Affections, and
 oppose us in our worldly Designs and
 sensual Satisfactions. And here the Jews
 were exceedingly defective. They made
 void the *Fifth* Commandment by their
 own Traditions. They were full of Ran-
 cour and Spite, and Bloody Malice ; as
 appears by their Carriage towards our
Saviour. From whence we may see how
 little

little they valu'd the *Sixth* Commandment; and how little the *Ninth*, when they set up False-Witnesses against Him.

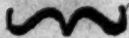
SERM.
XIII.


NAY, they kept the *First* Table, that they might the better break the *Second*; and made their Devotions and Worship of God, Instruments of Fraud and Oppression. They made long Prayers, and were very exact in all those Religious Duties which made most Noise and Show; that, by an Appearance of great Sanctity, they might get a fairer Opportunity of compassing their By-Ends, their selfish and worldly Designs. And therefore our Saviour wisely order'd his Discourses according to the Temper of that People, and the State of those Times wherein he liv'd. And if there be Any among Christians of this Temper, who would willingly and gladly observe the Commands of the *First* Table, if they might be dispens'd with in the *Second*; who would be very well content to give God his Due, if they might deal as they pleas'd with their Neighbour; who would be constant in their Attendance upon the publick Worship and the outward Ordinances

SERM. nances of Religion, if they might live as
XIII. they list in private, and indulge themselves
 in their secret Sins: 'Tis highly fit that
 they should be put in Mind of the Du-
 ties of the *Second Table*, as being abso-
 lutely necessary to be perform'd by all
 those who *would enter into Life*.

3dly and *Lastly*; I would observe,
 that Moral Duties make a great part of
 true Religion. Our Saviour here gives us
 the Sum and Substance of what God re-
 quires at our Hands; and reckons up the
 Duties which we owe to our Neighbour;
 All which are certainly of a Moral Na-
 ture.

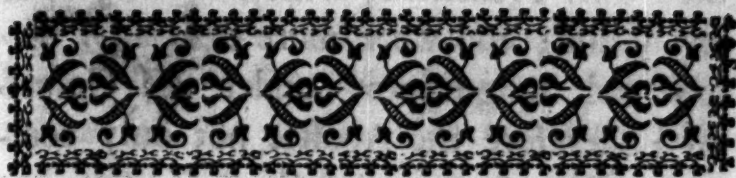
PIETY towards God, is here suppos'd,
 tho' not expressly mention'd. And un-
 doubtedly we serve God as much and
 as faithfully, when we are Honest and
 Just in our Dealings, when we are Kind
 and Compassionate, Helpful and Beneficial
 to Others; as by our immediate Worship
 of Him. In all those Places where we have
 a short and summary Account of the whole
 Body of Religion, these Duties are never
 left out, but always absolutely insisted
 on. They are principal Ingredients
 of

of Religion. And tho' they have been SERM.
sighted and neglected by some Men, as XIII.
very low Attainments and beggarly Things, 
in respect of I know not what Spiritualities; yet the Scripture, you see, makes no small Account of them: And 'tis in vain for any Man to think of being Godly and Religious without them. They are the Conditions of *entring into Life*; and chief Ingredients of that *Holiness*, *without which no Man shall see the Lord.*



of Religion. And tho' they have been 287
 and selected by some Men, as XIII.
 way of Reason and good Things
 instead of what was before spiritual
 in: yet the Scripture, and the makes no
 full Account of them: And it is in vain
 for any Man to think of being Godly and
 Religious without them. They are the
 Commandment of living into Life: and which
 ingredient of that holiness, without which
 no Man shall be the Lord: and which
 is the basis of that holiness, and which
 is the foundation of that holiness, and which
 is the basis of that holiness, and which





2 TIM. ii. 19.

*Nevertheless the Foundation of
God standeth sure, having
this Seal, The Lord know-
eth them that are his. And,
let every one that nameth
the Name of Christ, depart
from Iniquity.*



THE Apostle had just been SREM.
warning *Timothy* against in- XIV.
termedling with the Dis-
putes of the *Jewish* Zealots;
which were carried on with
so much Heat and Eagerness, to the De-
struction of all Charity, and the Stag-
gering the Faith of weak Christians. These
Disputes were of a frivolous Nature, about
Vol. II D d their

SERM. their own Traditions, which were never of
 XIV. any Value; and were more especially use-
 less and insignificant under the Gospel.
 And therefore the Apostle not only com-
 mands *Timothy* to avoid them himself, but
 to charge Others also to lay them aside.

^{2 Tim. ii.} *Charging them before the Lord, that they*
^{14, 15.} *strive not about words, to no profit, but to*
the subverting of the hearers. Study to
shew thy self approved unto God, a Work-
man that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly
dividing the word of truth; i.e. cutting
off all impertinent Disputes, and deliver-
ing out nothing but the plain and im-
portant Doctrines of Christianity. But
^{ver. 15.} *shun profane and vain babblings; for they*
will increase unto more ungodliness. And
then he shews of what dangerous Con-
sequence to the Church this turbulent
and disputing Temper is, infecting and
eating out all good Principles. Of which
^{ver. 17,} *he gives two Instances: And their word*
^{18.} *will eat as doth a canker; of whom is*
Hymeneus and Philetus; who concerning the
truth have erred, saying that the resur-
rection is past already; and overthrow the
faith of some. They turn'd the Resurre-
ction into an Allegory, making it to be
 nothing

nothing else but a Resurrection to Piety and Virtue; and denying that there was any such thing to be expected as the Resurrection of the Body. Or else they gave out, that the Resurrection of good Men was already past, and that there was nothing more of that Kind to be look'd for; grounding this Notion upon their idle Traditions.

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AND in the Text, the Apostle subjoins a Consideration, which, if duly weigh'd, would prevent these Disputes from having any such mischievous Effects, *viz.* That none of these Disputes can alter the Nature of Things, or make them Uncertain. The different Opinions which Men are of, in religious Matters; tho' they were more and greater than they are, cannot really affect the Truth of Religion. They cannot shake the Foundation of our Faith and Hope, nor prejudice any one fundamental Article of our Belief, nor dissolve our Obligation to the Practice of any one single Virtue. And in case of any controverted Point, we may comfort ourselves with what the Apostle says, *Nevertheless the Foundation of God standeth sure.*

WITH this Latitude, I think the

SERM. Apostle's words are to be understood, as
 XIV. including the Gospel-Covenant in general,
 and not to be restrain'd to the particular
 Article of the Resurrection.

For tho' the word, *ῥεμνίς*, signifies
 a *Foundation*, and is in other places of
 Scripture apply'd to *the Resurrection of the*
 Dead, as being a fundamental Article of
 the Christian Religion; yet, as Learned
 Men have observ'd, the word is some-
 times us'd for an Instrument of Contract,
 or an Indenture-Writing, whereby two
 Parties do mutually oblige themselves to
 each other. And this Sense of the word
 is most agreeable to the *Seal* which fol-
 lows, *Nevertheless the Foundation of God*
standeth sure, having this Seal. For such
 Writings and Instruments use to have
 their Seals appendant to them, each side
 whereof had a Motto, or Inscription, the
 one suiting with the one Party contracting,
 and the other with the other. In allusion
 to which, the Apostle, who is here de-
 claring to us the Terms of the Covenant
 between God and Man, represents it un-
 der the Notion of an Instrument with a
 Seal affix'd to it. Which Seal, according
 to Custom, is here said to have an In-
 scription

Hebr. vi.
 1, 2.

Mede,
 pag. 82.

scription on both sides, agreeable to the SERM.
Condition of the Persons contracting. On XIV.
God's part, there is this Motto, *The Lord*
knoweth them that are his; i. e. God will
own and reward his faithful Servants.
And who they are, the Motto on Man's
part declares, *Let every one that nameth*
the name of Christ, let every Christian, *de-*
part from iniquity.

THIS Foundation, the Apostle tells
us, *standeth sure*, notwithstanding all the
Wranglings and perverse Disputings of
Men. However Men may differ in their
Opinions, dispute and distinguish; what-
ever they may call in question, doubt
of, or deny; the Terms of the Gospel
are inviolably the same, and sufficiently
plain to every sincere Enquirer.

So that my Design from these words,
is to obviate the ill Uses which the Ene-
mies of Religion make of the Disputes
that have been rais'd about it; and to
prevent or remove those Scruples and Dif-
ficulties, which these Disputes are apt to
breed in the Minds of weak, tho' serious
Persons. For he that shall take a view
of the different Opinions of Mankind in
religious Matters, and observe their Op-

SERM. position, and at the same time consider
 XIV. the Fondness and Devotion with which
 they are embrac'd, and the Resolution
 and Eagerness with which they are maintain'd: and shall further take notice of the many Changes and Revolutions of Opinions; how the Doctrines which have been espous'd in one Age, have been discarded in the next; and what was once thought to have been fully establish'd, has in tract of Time come to be question'd, and at last exploded; may perhaps think he has reason to suspect, either that there is no such thing as true Religion at all, or that Mankind hath no sufficient Means to attain a certain Knowledge of it.

IT may therefore be of Use to shew, that these Disputes, how many and various soever they have been, are not of that Consequence which by some is given out; nor do infer That Uncertainty in the Matters debated, which the By-standers are apt to imagine, or would gladly have; but may for the most part be determin'd either way, and yet the *Foundation of God standeth sure*; the main Substance of Religion is not at all affected, nor the great End and Design of the

the Gospel defeated. This is what I SERM.
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shall endeavour to shew, by the following Observations.

Ist, I shall observe in general, That the Disputings of Men, about what Subject soever, do not infer any Uncertainty in the Matter under Debate, nor affect the Truth or Falshood of it. Things are true or false in themselves, and by their own Nature, antecedently to all Enquiries about them. Mens being divided in their Opinions, may indeed in some Cases prove, that the Things about which they are so divided, are obscure and difficult, and that we want sufficient Means to arrive at any Certainty concerning them; but cannot be urg'd as an Argument that there is no such thing as Certainty, and that we ought to give up ourselves to a general Doubting.

THERE have indeed been those who have maintain'd this Principle, that there is no such thing as *Certainty*; and upon this, have set up for universal Scepticism. But this is manifestly an absurd and inconsistent Principle, and necessarily overthrows itself. For 'tis impossible to be

SERM. certain that there is nothing certain, without granting the Truth of what we deny. He that affirms that there is nothing Certain, allows the Truth of that one Proposition at least: And by the same Means that he arrives at Certainty in That Truth, he may come to the Knowledge of others; and so be forc'd to quit That. The common Principles of Knowledge, cannot be destroy'd by any Disputes whatever; nor should any Disputes ever make Men call These in question: For all Disputes whatever, suppose these, and proceed upon them. And if there was no such thing as Truth and Falshood; or, which to us would be the same, if there was no *Criterion*, no way of distinguishing between one and the other; all Disputes and Debates, all Conference and Discourse would be idle and impertinent, and the Gift of Speech and Power of Thought would be to no manner of Purpose. For all these suppose some common Maxims and Principles, some general Truths; by the Help of which, we may clear up and come at others. So that tho' Men may dispute the Truth of every Thing; yet the Foundations of Knowledge

ledge stand sure, and cannot be shaken ;
nor will the Mind of Man, unless it be his
own fault, ever be such a floating Thing,
as not to be able to determine it self in
any of those Enquiries it pursues. For tho'
there be many things confessedly out of
its reach, yet there are enough wherein
it may arrive at Certainty and Satisfaction,
and employ its Faculties with Profit and
Pleasure.

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2dly, THE same Observation will hold,
of Disputes concerning Religion in Ge-
neral, or Natural Religion. Such Disputes
can never shake the main Foundations of
Religion, nor make the Grounds of it pre-
carious, so as to leave Men at liberty whe-
ther they will have any Religion at all.
The Being of a G O D, and his Provi-
dence ; The Difference and Distinction
between Moral Good and Evil ; are some
of the Foundations of Natural Religion :
And these Truths, the General Principles
of Human Reason and Knowledge will lead
us to.

F O R however Men may dispute about
the more Particular Nature of God, and
the Manner of his Existence, or the Me-
thods

SERM. thods of his Providence in the Government
 XIV. of the World; they will be forc'd to admit,
 the Notion of such a Being, as we distinguish by the Name and Character of GOD. This is a Conclusion which we shall find it absolutely necessary to come to: Because without it, we can account for nothing; neither for our own Existence, nor for that of any thing else. From the Being of a GOD, and those Attributes of Goodness and Justice, Wisdom, Power, and the like, which are inseparable from Him; a Providence will easily follow. And then, as to the Distinction between Moral Good and Evil; the natural Fitness there is in some Things to be done, and the Unfitness in others; This, whatever difficult Cases may be put to perplex and confound it, is in the main as evident as the Difference and Proportion there is between Lines and Numbers. Nay, the former is more manifest to the Mind of Man than the latter, and needs not that Study and Application to make it out.

THESE Foundations of Natural Religion stand sure, and are Proof against all the Attempts that can be made upon them. And whoever duly considers them, will find

find them so well-grounded, and that they have so much Truth and Certainty on their side, that 'tis impossible for any Wit and Sophistry to baffle his belief of them; but He would stand alone in Defence of them, tho' the whole World should Oppose Him. *Heaven and Earth may sooner pass away, than these Foundations be shaken.*

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3dly, To come nearer; and from Natural, to proceed to Reveal'd Religion, and particularly to the Christian Revelation.

THO' there are many False Spirits gone out into the World, and Men have pretended to come with Revelations from God, when He never spake unto them; and tho' never-so-many Difficulties and Disputes may be rais'd, about the Way and Method of God's Revealing Himself to Men: The Possibility of the Thing can never be call'd in question, by those who have any just Apprehensions of the Power of GOD, and the Nature of Man. There being nothing more absurd than to doubt whether GOD, who gave us all the Power we have to discover those several Truths which lie within the Bounds of Natural Enquiry,

SERM. Enquiry, can inform us of other Truths

XIV. which are out of our reach ; when one

Man can acquaint another with many Things, which he could not otherwise have known. That GOD should some time or other do this, thus reveal his Good-will and Pleasure to Us, must be own'd highly probable at least, if we consider His Mercy and Loving-kindness, and Man's Weakness and Infirmary, and how much the World wanted such a Revelation. And that God has actually done it in the Case before us, in the Christian Religion; we have the highest Evidence that the Nature of the Thing will admit, from the Principles of Historical Faith. If we allow the Truth of any Ancient History, we cannot deny the Truth of the Gospel-History; and then the Divine Revelation of the Christian Religion inevitably follows. So that notwithstanding all the Cavils and Disputes which have been rais'd about Christianity, the general Grounds of it stand unmov'd, and we are certain that it is a Religion which has God for its Author.

THIS Religion is contain'd in the Writings of the New Testament, the Authority

thority of which Book stands at least on SERM.
as good a foot, as the Authority of any XIV.
other Book of equal Antiquity. And tho' 
there were Disputes at first about the
Genuineness of some of these Writings; yet
this Matter has been long since settled, to
the Satisfaction of all Reasonable and Com-
petent Enquirers; and That by the same
Rules whereby the Writings of other Au-
thors have been adjusted, and the spu-
rious ones seperated from the genuine. As
to the Errors and Mistakes which may
have crept into the Sacred Text, the va-
rious Readings, the Corruptions, Addi-
tions, and Alterations of any kind, which
in tract of Time these Writings may have
undergone, and which have been so much
magnify'd; they are less considerable
both in Number and Weight, than what
are to be met with, in Proportion, in
any Antient Writings. To which I shall
add, That the New Testament has one
Advantage over all other Ancient Wri-
tings, which makes all Objections of this
Nature to be of little or no Weight; and
That is This,

THAT the New Testament was com-
pil'd by several Hands, which were all
engag'd

SERM. engag'd in the same Subject, and upon
XIV. the same Design, transmitting down to
Posterity a full and true Account of the
Christian Revelation. Several of these
Pieces are also address'd to several distinct
Persons, or distinct Societies of Men ;
upon which Account both the Historical
and Doctrinal parts of Christianity are
frequently repeated, and come often over
in the New Testament ; so that what
is dubious in one place, may be clear'd
up in another ; and the Errors we sus-
pect to have crept into some parts of this
Book, may be corrected, by comparing
those parts with such others as relate to
the same Matter. And, which is still
more considerable, the Loss, not only of
some single Texts, but ev'n of a whole
Book, could not supplant our Belief ; since
we should meet with what was sufficient,
in those that remain'd, to be the Foun-
dation of our Faith, and the Rule of our
Practice. For the Necessary and Essen-
tial Points of Christianity are not so spa-
ringly mention'd in the several Books
which make up the New Testament, that
if any one or two of them should mis-
carry, Christianity it'self would fail from
the

the Earth. On the contrary, they are so SERM.
plainly express'd, and so frequently incul- XIV.
cated in every Gospel, and in almost every 
Epistle, that there is no Danger of this.
So that amidst all the Disputes and Diffi-
culties which have been, or can be rais'd
about the Authority of the *New Testament*,
and the Integrity of the present Copies,
the Foundation of God standeth sure; and
we have as much reason to believe the *New*
Testament to be the Book which it pretends
to be, as we have to believe the like of
any other Old Book; and we are sure that
this Book is come down to us more pure
and genuine, and fitter to answer the Pur-
poses for which it was at first written, than
any other which has descended through
so long a tract of Time. But all this, it
seems, is of little or no Use to Us: For
tho' we have got the *New Testament*, and
the Authority of That Book is agreed on;
yet Men are so divided in their Interpre-
tations of That Book, and put such diffe-
rent Constructions upon it, and this in
Points of the highest Consequence, that
nothing certain can be collected from it,
and we are as much to seek as ever. To
this I Answer, by observing,

4thly,

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4^{thly}, THAT the numberless Disputes which have been rais'd upon Questions in Christianity, about the Doctrines and Articles of this Religion; do not at all affect the main Substance of it, nor destroy the great End and Design for which it was revealed to the World. So that still we may be certain, notwithstanding all these Disputes, *the Foundation of God standeth sure*. The Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, are plain and express; and 'tis out of the Power of the Disputers of this World, to render them uncertain and ineffectual. If any Man has built upon this Foundation what is not agreeable to it, it will fall and come to nought, without any Danger to the Foundation it self. If such Doctrines have been advanc'd for Doctrines of Christianity, as are dubious; 'tis fit they should be disputed, and unfit that they should be insisted upon as Terms of Communion and Salvation; because this is an Infringement of that *Liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free*.

THIS is the Case of particular Expli-
cations of the general Articles of Christia-
nity: Men may agree in their Belief of
the

the Doctrine, tho' they differ in their Way SREM.
of Explaining it. None of these Disputes XIV.
concern the Substance of our Faith, nor
the Foundation of our Belief; but may
be decided either way, without any De-
triment to That.

NEITHER the Time nor your Pa-
tience, will permit me to pursue this
Argument any further at present. But
what I have already advanc'd, is, I hope,
sufficient for the Proof of what I at first
intended; which was, that none of these
Religious Disputes are of such dreadful
Consequence as some would make them,
and as they may at first sight appear to
others who have no such Designs to serve.
For they do not infer any such Uncer-
tainty in Religion, as to render all Re-
ligions alike, or to make it indifferent
whether we be of any Religion at all.
Which Side soever we take in these con-
troverted Points, *the Foundation of God*
standeth sure; and our Obligations to Piety
and a good Life, which is the End of
all Religion, remain inviolably the same.

LET us not then be soon shaken in
Mind, or terrify'd, as if the Foundations
of the Earth were out of Course, when

SERM. such Disputes arise ; since neither the
 XIV. Wicked can make such Advantage of these
 Disputes as to excuse their neglect of Christianity, nor can the Weak be reasonably offended or stagger'd in their belief of it. For if Disputes which are suppos'd to be of the highest Consequence, may be determin'd either way, without any such dangerous Inference as the making it altogether uncertain what we should believe and practice in Religion ; we must be very weak indeed, and very willing to be *carry'd to and fro with every wind of Doctrine*, if we suffer ourselves to be shaken by smaller Contentions.

WHEN Men have disputed as long as they can, and have call'd every thing in question which will bear a Dispute ; there will be many Points in Religion, and those of the greatest Moment, which will not bear any Controversy at all ; which have no Difficulty of being understood, but lie level to the meanest Capacities, so that *he that runneth may read them ; and a way-faring man, tho' a fool, cannot err therein. Repentance from dead works, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ; believing that he came from God, and brought a Revelation* of

of his Father's Will; which Revelation assures us that God has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in righteousness by our Lord Jesus Christ, and reward every man according to his deeds; and, in consequence of this Belief, living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World: I say, these are Points universally acknowledg'd, and which if we adhere to, we can never miscarry. This is that Foundation of God which standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.



of his Father's Will, which Revelation bears
 witness in that God has appointed a Day. XIV.
 in which he will judge the World in right-
 eousness by our Lord Jesus Christ, and
 reward every man according to his works.
 and in consequence of this belief, being
 holy, righteous, and good in this pre-
 sent World: I say, these are Points uni-
 versally acknowledged, and which we
 adhere to, we can never misstate. This
 is the foundation of God which he has
 laid, having said, The Lord knoweth
 them that are his. And let every one
 that nameth the name of Christ, depart
 from iniquity.





I COR. XV. 21, 22.

*For since by Man came Death,
by Man came also the Resur-
rection of the Dead. For
as in Adam all die, even so
in Christ shall all be made
alive.*



THE Apostle having establish'd SERM. XV.
the Truth of our Saviour's
Resurrection, by such Argu-
ments as were proper to
prove a Matter of Fact, viz.
the joint-Testimony of several credible
Witnesses, who at several times saw him,
and convers'd with him after he rose from
the Dead; proceeds to infer from thence,

SERM. the Certainty of our own Resurrection, and
XV. of a Future State.

THE Argument he uses upon this Occasion, is *ad Hominem* ; i. e. such as the *Jews* could not deny, without destroying all that Analogy between the First and Second *Adam*, which themselves maintain'd from their own Scriptures. For their Opinion was, That the *Messiah* was the Second *Adam*, who should Raise the Dead ; as the First *Adam*, by his Sin, brought Death upon Himself and all his Posterity.

FOR if all true Believers (and such only does this Discourse of the Apostle's concern) are not restored to Life by the *Messiah* the Second *Adam*, as all Mankind were made Subject to Death by the Sin of the First *Adam* ; the main Instance of the Analogy is lost. But if they be, as the Apostle affirms in the Text ; the Agreement is kept whole and entire.

But not to insist upon Niceties and Uncertainties ; 'tis evident, that God thought fit to order Matters, that *since by Man came Death into the World, by Man also should come the Resurrection of the Dead*. That as the *Death* which all Men suffer, is owing to *Adam* ; so the *Life* that all shall be

be restor'd to again, should be procur'd
them by CHRIST.

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'TIS manifest from the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*, that our *Saviour* was sent to repair the Damage we sustain'd by *Adam's Fall*, to recover and restore to us whatever he lost us. And therefore, for the clearer understanding the Doctrine of the Text, it will be necessary,

- I. To consider, what *Adam's Sin* brought upon Us.

This will help us,

- II. To understand, what our *Saviour* is here said to have done for Us.

And Both together will give us the full Meaning of the Text, and furnish us with fit Matter for the Employment of our serious Thoughts and Meditations.

- I. LET us consider what *Adam's Sin* brought upon Us.

ADAM, by transgressing the Divine Law, in eating of the *forbidden Fruit*, fell from his Integrity, from that State of perfect Obedience wherein he was to have

E c 4

per-

SERM. persever'd. And by this Fall he lost
 XV. Paradise, wherein was Tranquillity and
 the *Tree of Life*; i. e. he lost Bliss and
 Immortality.

THE Penalty annex'd to the Breach of
 the Law, with the Sentence pronounc'd
 Gen. ii. 17. by God upon it, show this. *But of the
 Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,
 thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that
 thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*
 Not that he should immediately die; as
 the Event plainly prov'd; (for he did
 eat; but in the day he did eat, he did not
 actually die:) but that from That Moment
 he should become Mortal, liable to Death;
 and die, when God saw fit. For the
 Punishment here threatned, was by way
 of Sanction; and therefore God both
 might, and did, without any impeachment
 of his Truth and Veracity, defer the Exe-
 cution of it. To which End, he was
 turn'd out of Paradise, where was the
Tree of Life; and shut out for ever from
 it, lest he should take thereof and live
 for ever.

FROM hence 'tis evident, that what-
 ever the *Tree of Life* was, whether we
 understand it in a Literal or a Figurative
 Sense,

Sense, it was something which would have secur'd to Man his Being and Well-being ; consequently, that the State of Paradise, where this Tree grew, was a State of Immortality, of Life without End ; and that Man was originally design'd for an uninterrupted Continuance in Life and Health. Which high Privilege he lost, that very Day that he eat of the *forbidden Fruit*.

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XV.

FROM that Instant, his Life began to shorten and waste, and to draw to an end. So that from thence to his actual Death, was but like the time of a Prisoner between the Sentence past and the Execution, which was in view and certain. Death then enter'd into the World, and shew'd his Face ; which before was shut out, and was altogether a Stranger and perfectly unknown.

So St. Paul tells us, *Rom. v. 12. By one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin ; i. e. a State of Death and Mortality. And 1 Cor. xv. 22. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive : i. e. By reason of Adam's Transgression, all Men are mortal, and come to die. In all which places the most natural*

SERM. natural and obvious Meaning of *Death*, is
XV. a ceasing to Be, the losing of all Actions
 of Life and Sense : mens being reduc'd to
 their primitive State of Insensibility ; ac-
 cording to the Sentence pass'd upon *Adam*,
Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou re-
turn. This, I say, is the most obvious
 Meaning of the word *Death*, and what it
 was most natural for *Adam* to understand
 by it.

Gen. iii.
 19.

HE could have no Notion of Death,
 as it signifies a State of Eternal Misery.
 As yet he was a stranger to every thing
 of that kind, and was acquainted with
 nothing but pleasing and agreeable Sen-
 sations. He found himself possess'd of
 Life and Being ; and not only so, but sur-
 rounded with every thing which made
 for his Ease and Happiness. He could
 remember his Beginning, and knew that
 he had not been long in this Condition.
 The Loss of this Being, and the Depriva-
 tion of this Happiness, is what he might
 easily form a Notion of ; and is therefore
 in all probability what he understood by
Death, and returning again to the *Dust*
 out of which he was so lately taken.
 Such a Death came on *Adam*, and all
 his

his Posterity, by his first Disobedience in **SERM.**
Paradise; under which Death they should **XV.**
have lain for ever, had it not been for
that Redemption which was wrought for
them by Jesus Christ.

ANOTHER part of the Sentence
pronounc'd upon *Adam* for his Sin,
was this; *And unto Adam God said;* Gen. iii.
17, &c.
*Because thou hast hearken'd unto the voice
of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the Tree
of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou
shalt not eat of it: cursed, (i. e. less blessed)
is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt
thou eat of it, all the days of thy Life.
Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth
to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of
the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt
thou eat bread, 'till thou return unto the
ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for
Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou
return.*

THIS again shews, that *Paradise* was
a Place of Bliss as well as Immortality;
without Drudgery, and without Sorrow.
But when Man was turn'd out of it, he
was expos'd to the Toil, to the Anxiety and
Frailties, to the Miseries and Infirmities
of this Mortal Life; which should end
in

SERM.
XV.

in the Dust out of which he was made, and to which he should return; and then have no more Life or Sense than the Dust had, out of which he was made.

As *Adam* was turn'd out of Paradise, so all his Posterity were necessarily born out of it, out of the reach of the Tree of Life; all, like their Father *Adam*, in a State of Mortality, void of the Tranquillity and Bliss of Paradise. As *Adam*, by his Sin, became Mortal himself; so he must of course propagate a Mortal Nature to all his Posterity. In this State and Condition were all the Descendants of *Adam*, ev'n all Mankind, before the Coming of our Saviour.

THE common Objection rais'd here, and which so many stumble at, is; How is it consistent with the Justice and Goodness of God, that the Posterity of *Adam* should suffer for his Sin, the Innocent be punish'd for the Guilty?

IN Answer to which, It is to be consider'd, that the keeping any one from what he has no Right to, cannot be call'd a Punishment; nor is there any Injustice in it. *Adam* himself had no Natural Right to a State of Immortality in Paradise: He had

had this Privilege conferr'd upon him by **SERM.**
a particular Act of Grace or Favour. The **XV.**
Tree of Life was intended to make him
Immortal : Which he would have had no
need of, if he had been so by Nature.

THE Apostle describes him as Mortal;
without any Consideration, or so much as
mention of his Sin; and *Christ* as Immor-
tal : The one as our Natural, and the
other as our Spiritual Parent : *The first* **I Cor. xv.**
man Adam was made a living Soul, the last ^{45.}
Adam made a quickening Spirit. i. e. The
First *Adam* was made of an Animal Con-
stitution, endow'd with an Animal Life;
which unless supported with a constant
Supply of Food and Air, will quickly fail
and perish; and must at last, do what we
can, dissolve and come to an end. But
the Second *Adam* was made of a Spiritual
Constitution, with a Power of giving the
same to others. For at the Resurrection
we shall receive from *Christ*, Spiritual Bo-
dies; which shall have an Essential and
Natural inseparable Life in them, which
shall continue and subsist perpetually of
itself, without the help of Meat and
Drink, or Air, or any such foreign Sup-
port; without Decay, or any tendency to
a Disso-

SERM. a Dissolution. Of which our Saviour

XV. says, *They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the Resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more; for they are equal to the Angels, i. e. of an Angelical Nature and Constitution.* And St. Paul speaking of the same matter, says, *That Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.*

Luke xx.
35.

Phil. iii.
21.

WE see then, that the State of Immortality, which *Adam* was design'd for in Paradise, was a Privilege which he had no Natural Right to. It must have been a Supernatural Effect of God's Goodness and Power. This Privilege he was to enjoy, upon the Condition of his Obedience: Which he not performing, it was forfeited; and so he transmitted down Mortality and Death to his Posterity.

HAD he stood his ground, we cannot tell what our Condition in this World would have been; tho' we have reason to believe, it would have been much better than now it is. But if it had been a State of Immortality here, which seems highly probable; it must have been so by a special Act of Grace. For Men had no right to it either by Nature, or any other

other Claim. Such is the Texture and Composition of Human Bodies, that without a Miracle they could not subsist for Ever. And ev'n this temporary Mortal Life which is afforded us, is God's free Gift, we owe it to His Bounty ; nor does He injure us, when he takes it from us ; for 'tis what we could not claim as our Right ; 'tis God's, and 'tis lawful for Him to do what He will with his own. SERM.
XV.

HAD God taken from Mankind any thing that was their Right, or did he put Men into a State of Misery worse than not being, without any Fault or Demerit of their own ; This indeed would be hard to reconcile with the Notion which we have of Justice ; and much more with the Goodness, and other Attributes of the Supreme Being, which he has declar'd of Himself ; which Reason as well as Revelation must acknowledge to be in Him ; unless we will confound Good and Evil, God and Satan.

AND therefore tho' all die in *Adam*, yet none are truly and properly punish'd but for their own Deeds. The Apostle tells us, That God *will render to every one ; How ? according to his deeds : i. e. his own* Rom. ii. 6.

SERM. own Deeds, and not another's. To those
 XV. that *obey unrighteousness, indignation and*
wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul
of Men that doth evil. Whence 'tis evident,
 that every one's Sin is charg'd upon him-
 self only. And *Christ*, who certainly knew
 for what He should condemn Men at the
 Last Day, assures us, in the two places
 where he describes his Proceedings at the
 Great Judgment, that the Sentence of
 Condemnation passes only upon the *Workers*
of Iniquity, such as neglected to fulfil the
 Law in Acts of Charity and Mercy, *Mat.*
vii. 23. & xxv. 42. Luke xiii. 27. And
 again, *John v. 29.* our Saviour tells the
Jews, that All shall come forth of their
 Graves; *they that have done Good, to the*
Resurrection of Life; and they that have
done Evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation.
 But neither here nor elsewhere is any Con-
 demnation of any One, for what his Fore-
 Father *Adam* had done. Which 'tis not
 likely should have been omitted, if That
 should have been a Cause, why any One
 was adjudged to the *Fire, with the Devil*
and his Angels. And he tells his Disciples,
 that when he comes again with his Angels,
 in the Glory of his Father, then he will
 render

render to every one according to his Works, SERM.
Mat. xvi. 27. XV.

THUS indeed it fares the worse with Us for *Adam's Sin*; but properly speaking, we are not punish'd for it, nor depriv'd of any thing that was our Due.

IF therefore we will say, that *Death* is the Punishment of *Sin*: It must not be so understood, that, where there is no room for *Sin*, there is no room for *Death*; Which if absolutely taken, is most certainly false. For *Death* had Place in *Adam* ev'n before the Fall. He was Mortal, and was so created of God from the Beginning, that tho' he had never Sinned, he might and would, if left to Himself and his own Nature, have Died: I say, if left to Himself; For, no doubt, God could have hinder'd him for Ever from Dying, tho' he was Mortal. For we must distinguish between *Mortality* and *Death* itself, or a *Necessity of Dying*. A Man may be Mortal, who is yet not at all subject to the Necessity of Dying, or *Death*. As those Believers, who shall be found Alive at the Coming of our Lord, shall no doubt be Mortal; i. e. such as by their own Nature might Die, were they left wholly to themselves;

SERM. and yet they shall not Die, but in a Mo-
 XV. ment shall be Chang'd ; and of Mortal,
 become, in the twinkling of an Eye, Im-
 mortal. Therefore not *Mortality*, but *Death*
 it self, or the *Necessity of Dying*, is the
 Punishment of *Sin*. For such was the
 Nature of Man, ev'n before he finned ;
 that he might Die. He was form'd out
 of the Dust of the Earth, and made up of
 such Materials, as might many ways be
 dissolv'd, and reduc'd to their primitive
 State. Numberless are the Accidents which
 may kill the Body, and put an end to this
 mortal Life, and from which none could
 have been exempted but by a particular
Privilege.

THIS *Privilege* was at first granted to
Adam ; but resum'd again, for his not per-
 forming the Conditions upon which he
 held it. Hereupon he was turn'd out of
 Paradise ; and all his Posterity born out of
 it, out of the reach of the *Tree of Life*,
 which was to have conferr'd Immortality
 upon them. Whence it follows, that all
 Men, thus left to the Natural Decays of
 their Constitution, and the innumerable
 Accidents with which they are surround-
 ed, must necessarily Die, and remain un-
 der

der the Power of Death for ever, and so be utterly lost. SERM.
XV.

BUT this Death, or Necessity of Dying, tho' it was the Punishment of Sin in our First Parents, is not so in their Posterity. The reason why all Die, ev'n Infants as well as grown Persons, is not because they are punish'd for some Sin they are guilty of, but because they are born of *Adam*, and descend from Parents who are Mortal.

THE Case is much the same as when any One is punish'd in Civil Matters for any Crime he has been guilty of, by Confiscation, Banishment, or Degradation from his Honours. This, tho' it affects his Posterity, and they suffer for it; yet it cannot properly be call'd a Punishment, but the Condition in which they were Born. In like manner, *Adam's* Posterity, who Die for or upon account of his Sin, are not punish'd for his Sin, but only fulfil the Condition in which they were Born, and which naturally requires them to submit to Mortality.

AND this may suffice for the *First* Point I propos'd to consider; which was, What *Adam's* Sin brought upon us; and

SERM. That was, A Necessity of Dying, and submitting to all the Laws and Conditions of this mortal State, and continuing for ever under the Power of Death and the Grave. This will help us to understand, in the *Second* place,

II. WHAT our Saviour is here said to have done for Us.

THE *Text* tells us both what this is, and how it is done. *Christ* has restor'd all Mankind to Life, from this Estate of Death which *Adam's* Sin brought upon them. And this is said to be done by a Resurrection from the Dead : *Since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection from the Dead.* Whereby it appears, that the Life which *Jesus Christ* restores to all Men, is that Life which they receive again at the Resurrection : Then all Mankind shall be recover'd from Death, which otherwise they would have continu'd under, lost for ever ; as appears by *St. Paul's* arguing concerning the *Resurrection*, 1 Cor. xv. where he builds all our Hopes of Immortality upon it ; and more than intimates, that, without it, we should, though not be utterly extinct, be destitute

tute of *such* Life and Being as is necessary to a happy Immortality. SERM.
XV.

FOR tho' the Souls of Men be Immaterial, and may subsist of themselves when their Bodies are moulder'd into Dust; yet as they seem to be design'd in their Original Frame and Make, to be Inmates and Inhabitants of some sort of Bodies or other, and to want some material Vehicle whereby to exert their several Faculties and Operations : so, when they are stript of all Body and Matter, and while they continue thus naked, they must necessarily be in a very weak, unnatural, and imperfect State. So that tho' it be undoubtedly certain, that there is something in Man which will escape the Grave, and, when the Body returns to the Dust out of which it was taken, *the Spirit shall return to God who gave it*, Eccles. xii. 7; shall still subsist, and have its Life and Being continu'd to it : yet this will be a very imperfect Life, an unnatural and uneasy State, wherein we shall feel none of that Vigour wherewith our Souls now act in this State of Union with the Body, but their Faculties will want some material Organs through which to exert their Strength.

SERM. FOR 'tis very probable, that created Spirits were never design'd to be totally separate from Matter ; because they are both Active and Passive. 'Tis perhaps the Prerogative of the Great GOD alone, who is the Father of the Spirits of all Flesh, and who is only active ; to be a pure Spirit, free from all Matter, and all material and sensible Affections. This may be his incommunicable Perfection. And the Nature of all created Spirits may be such as makes their Perfection to consist in their being united to some material Vehicle, so that they are Imperfect and Incomplete without it.

WHENCE it will follow, that, without the Resurrection of the Body, without our Souls being restor'd again and reunited to some material Vehicle with proper and suitable Organs, we should be depriv'd of the greatest part of that Happiness which we now enjoy.

THIS is what the Apostle seems to intimate in *chap. v. of this 2d Epist. to the Corinthians, ver. 1, 2, &c. For we know, that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolv'd, we have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in*
the

the Heavens. For I know, that if this my **SERM.**
Body, which is but a Tent for my sojourn- **XV.**
ing here upon Earth for a short time,
were dissolv'd; I shall have another of a
Divine Original, which shall not, like
Buildings made with Mens Hands, be sub-
ject to Decay, but shall be Eternal in the
Heavens.

FOR in this we *groan earnestly, de-*
siring to be clothed upon with our House
which is from Heaven; if so be, that
being Cloathed, we shall not be found
Naked.

WHILE I am in this Tabernacle of
the Body, I groan by reason of the Pres-
sures of it; and I desire, without putting
off this Mortal Earthly Body by Death,
to have that Celestial Body superinduc'd;
if so be the Coming of Christ shall over-
take me in this Life, before I put off
this Body.

FOR we that are in this Tabernacle
do groan, being burdened: Not for that
we would be uncloathed, but cloathed
upon, that Mortality might be swallow'd
up of Life.

FOR we that are in the Body, groan
under the Inconveniences that attend us

The Certainty of

SERM. in it; which yet we are not therefore
XV. willing to put off, but had rather, without dying, have it chang'd into a Celestial Immortal Body; that so this Mortal State may be put an end to, by an immediate Entrance into an Immortal Life.

WHERE speaking according to a common Opinion at that time, of the general Resurrection being near; he wishes not to put off this Body, not to be stript of it by Death; but to be of the Number of those, who, at the Coming of our Lord, without putting off these Bodies, shall be chang'd and cloath'd upon with their House from Heaven, and, without dying, be invested with those Spiritual, and Glorious, and Heavenly Bodies, which Men shall have at the Resurrection.

WHERE 'tis remarkable, that the Apostle, amidst all the Pressures and Difficulties he met with, and which would make a good Man especially willing to die; was very loath to part with this Body, and to remain in the State of the Dead, Naked and Uncloth'd 'till the Resurrection; but earnestly wishes to have his Immortal Body immediately put on, and places all his Hopes of Happiness in it.

THIS

THIS Matter will be further evident SERM.
XV.
from our *Saviour's* Discourse with *Martha*,
upon his Raising her Brother *Lazarus* from
the Dead, *John* xi. 25, 26.

THE History of which Miracle, is not related by the other *Evangelists*; and probably for this Reason, because, when they wrote their Gospels, *Lazarus*, who had been rais'd from the Dead, was alive, and in great danger of being put to Death by the Chief-Priests; because that by reason of Him, many of the *Jews* went away, left the City and Synagogue-Worship, and believ'd on *Jesus*, *John* xii. 10, 11. Wherefore those *Evangelists* thought it more advisable to take no Notice of this Miracle at present, since they had other Instances of Men rais'd from the Dead. But when *Lazarus* was Dead, and none could incur any Danger from the recital of this History, *St. John* thought fit to insert it amongst his Collection of Facts, which were omitted by the other *Evangelists*. For if there be any Truth in the Tradition which *Epiphanius* relates, *Lazarus* surviv'd thirty Years; in which time the three other *Evangelists* wrote.

OUR Saviour seems, by his Conduct
in

SERM. in this Miracle, to guard against all Cavil
 XV. and Exception in the Unbelieving *Jews*;
 and therefore tho' he had early Notice of
Lazarus's Sickneſs, he deferr'd going to
 his Houſe 'till he was Dead, and had
 been Buried *four days*, ver. 17. *Martha*,
 one of *Lazarus's* Sisters, and who was
 always ready to attend our Saviour, and
 miniſter unto him, as ſoon as ſhe heard
 that *Jeſus* was coming, went and met Him:
 but *Mary* ſat ſtill in the Houſe. Then ſaid
Martha unto Him, Lord, if thou haſt been
 here, my Brother had not died. But I know,
 that even now whatſoever thou wilt aſk of
 God, God will give it thee. *Jeſus* ſaid
 unto her, Thy Brother ſhall riſe again.
Martha ſaith unto Him, I know that he
 ſhall riſe again at the Reſurrection in the
 laſt day. *Jeſus* ſaid unto her, I am the Re-
 ſurrection, and the Life. i. e. There is no
 occaſion for your doubting of this, ſince
 'I am the Cauſe and Author of the Re-
 ſurrection, and may therefore fitly repre-
 ſent it. It being uſual among the *Hebrews*,
 to give the Name of the Effect to the
 Cauſe: as in chap. i. 4. of this Goſpel,
In Him was Life; i. e. Eternal Life; be-
 cauſe by Him is reveal'd to us the Way
 of

of obtaining Eternal Life. *I am the Re-* SERM.
XV.
surrection, and the Life : he that believeth
in me, tho' he were dead, yet shall he live ;
And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me,
shall never die, John xi. 25, 26. In the
Greek it is, *ἐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸ αἰῶνα*, *shall not*
die for ever. Answerable to *ζῆσθαι εἰς τὸ*
αἰῶνα, Gen. iii. 22, *live for ever ;* spoken
of the Tree of Life, which was design'd
to confer immortal Life upon Man. Or
it may refer also to what our Saviour says
of Himself and his Doctrine ; of the
Efficacy of what He was to Do and Suffer
for us ; *I am the Living Bread, which came* John vi.
down from Heaven : if any Man eat of this 51.
Bread, he shall live for ever.

MARTHA told our SAVIOUR, that
if He had been there before her Brother
dy'd, He, by that Divine Power which
He had manifested in so many Miracles
which He had done, could have sav'd his
Life ; And that now, if He would ask it
of GOD, he might obtain the Restoration
of his Life. *Jesus* tells her, that he shall
rise again. Which words *Martha* under-
standing of the General Resurrection at the
Last Day ; *Jesus* thereupon takes occasion
to intimate to her, that He was the Mes-
siah,

SERM. *fiab*, by telling her, that He was *the Re-*
 XV. *surrection and the Life* : i. e. That the
 ~~~~~ Life which Mankind shall be restored to  
 at the General Resurrection, was owing to  
 Him.

THIS was a Description of the *Messiah* :  
 It being a receiv'd Opinion among the  
*Jews*, that when the *Messiah* came, the  
 Just should rise, and live with him for  
 ever. And having made this Declaration  
 of Himself to be the *Messiah*, he asks  
*Martha, Believest thou this?* i. e. that  
 He was the *Messiah*, by whom Believers  
 should have Eternal Life at the Last Day?  
 And to this, she gives this direct and appo-  
 site Answer ; *Yea, Lord, I believe that*  
*thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which*  
*should come into the World.* The Question  
 was only, Whether she was fully satisfy'd  
 and perswaded, that those who Believ'd in  
 Him, should be Rais'd to Eternal Life?  
 That was, in Effect, Whether He was the  
*Messiah?* And to this she answers, *Yea,*  
*Lord, I believe this of Thee.* And then  
 she explains what was contain'd in that  
 Faith of her's; ev'n this, That He was the  
*Messiah* that was promis'd to come, by whom  
 alone Men were to receive Eternal Life.

WE see then, that Mankind shall receive that Life from the Second *Adam*, which they lost by the First. That this was a principal Character and distinguishing Mark of the *Messiah*, that He should have Power to raise up all Men at last to the General Judgment: According to what He says of Himself, in St. *John's* Gospel, *chap. v. ver. 25, &c. Verily verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, i. e. 'tis fix'd and settled, when the Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God: and they that hear, shall live. For as the Father hath Life in Himself; so hath he given to the Son to have Life in Himself.* Where 'tis plain from the Context, that *Life* signifies the Power of Raising from the Dead. So that all who Believe on Him, and Obey his Gospel, shall not finally continue under the Power of Death, and perish for Ever; but shall be restor'd to endless Life and Happiness.

NONE therefore will lose any thing by *Adam's* Sin, which by their own Righteousness they might have a Title to. For *Righteousness*, or an exact Obedience to the Law, seems, in the Scripture-Account,

to

SERM. to have a Claim of Right, by Virtue of  
 XV. God's Promise, to Eternal Life. Now to  
 him that worketh, is the Reward not reck-  
 oned of Grace, but of Debt, Rom. iv. 4.  
 i.e. To him that doth the Works of the  
 Law; not only of the Ceremonial, but  
 of the Moral Law: For Abraham's Work-  
 ing, was before the Ceremonial Law. And  
 Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his  
 Commandments, that they may have Right  
 to the Tree of Life.*

So that if any of the Posterity of Adam  
 were Just, they shall not lose the Reward  
 of it, Eternal Life and Bliss, by being  
 his Mortal Issue. Christ will bring them  
 all to Life again; and then they shall be  
 put every one upon his own Tryal, and  
 receive Judgment, as he is found to be  
 Righteous or not: And the Righteous, as  
 our Saviour says, Mat. xxv. 46. *shall go  
 into Life Eternal.* Nor shall any one miss  
 it, who has done what our Saviour directed  
 the Lawyer, who asked him, *what he  
 should do, to inherit Eternal Life?* Do  
 this; i.e. *what is written in the Law, and  
 required thereby, and thou shalt live,* Luke  
 x. 25.



ON the other side, It seems the unalterable Purpose of the Divine Justice, that no Unrighteous Person, no one that is guilty of any Breach of the Law, should be in Paradise; but that *the Wages of Sin* should be to every Man, as it was to *Adam*, an Exclusion of him out of that happy State of Immortality, and bring Death upon him. And this is so conformable to the Eternal and Establish'd Law of Right and Wrong, that it is spoke of as if it could not be otherwise. St. James says, *chap. i. ver. 15. Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth Death*; as it were by a natural and necessary Production. *Sin entered into the World*, (says St. Paul,) *and Death by Sin*, Rom. v. 12. And *chap. vi. 23. The Wages of Sin is Death*. Death is the Purchase of any, of every Sin. Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

AND this furnishes us with another Reason why all Men Die; Because *all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*; i. e. the Kingdom of God in Heaven, Rom. iii. 23. So that by the *Deeds of the Law*, no one could be justified,

SERM. justified, nor have Eternal Life and Bliss,  
XV. ver. 20.



ver. 9.

FROM this State of Death, our *Se-  
viour* has redeem'd us, by Establishing a  
more gracious Covenant between God and  
Man, wherein Allowances are made for  
our Failures; Sincerity is requir'd of us  
instead of Perfection; and what we want  
of Innocence, we are permitted to make  
up by Repentance. So that tho' we have  
Sinn'd, we have an Advocate with the  
Father, *Jesus Christ the Righteous, and  
He is the Propitiation for our Sins*; and  
tho' we Die for these Sins, as well as  
upon Account of *Adam's Sin*, we shall  
not die for ever, nor continue always  
under the Power of the Grave; but be  
restor'd again to a New Life, either of  
Happiness or Misery, according as our  
Works have been.

THE Consideration of what has been  
said upon this Subject, would furnish us  
with many serious Thoughts and Medi-  
tations; which I shall now but briefly  
suggest to you.

1<sup>st</sup> then, HENCE both the Justice  
and Goodness of God are manifested to  
us in a very particular Manner. His Ju-  
stice

stice, in that He has not only not punish'd us **SERM.**  
for the Sin of our first Parents, but only **XV.**  
for our own Personal Transgressions; and  
has moreover punish'd us less than ev'n  
these our Iniquities deserve.

**F**OR since *the Wages of every Sin is Death*, and there is not a Man who liveth and sinneth not; he might justly conclude the whole World under Sin, and deprive all Men of all Life and Being; and not only so, but put them into worse Circumstances than Non-existence, a State of Misery and Torment. Which is so far from being Unjust, that it is, in truth, no other than the Natural Consequence of a Rational Creature's transgressing the Rules of Reason. For if such a Creature be but upheld in Being, Misery and Unhappiness will follow of Course.

**B**UT behold the Goodness of God, who tho' he hath not freed us from that Necessity of Dying which *Adam's Sin* brought upon us, yet he hath taken away the Sting of Death, and disarm'd it of all it's Terror; by sending his Son to raise us from the Grave, and restore us to a New and Heavenly Life, to a State of Happiness and Immortality, far exceeding an



SERM. Earthly Paradise, provided we believe in  
 XV. His Son, receive Him for our Lord and  
 Master, and obey those Laws and Rules  
 of Life which He has given us.

2dly, SINCE by one man sin entered  
 into the world, and death by sin, and death  
 passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,  
 Rom. 5. 12. Since Sin hath had such a  
 Mark of God's Displeasure set upon it,  
 and has already been attended with such sad  
 Effects as the Death of all Mankind: This  
 should convince us of the Evil and Dan-  
 ger of Sin, and be a sufficient Warning  
 to avoid it, as a Thing of a most Per-  
 nicious Nature, and Destructive Conse-  
 quence.

FROM what God has already done  
 by way of Punishing Sin, we may be sure  
 He is in Earnest in his future Threatnings  
 against it. And since it has brought such  
 Desolation upon the Face of the Earth, and  
 wrought such Destruction in the World  
 that now is, we cannot doubt but it will  
 have a much more fatal Issue in the World  
 to come.

IT has brought Death into the World,  
 and involv'd all Men in it without Di-  
 stinction

inction. And Death is the most Shocking Thing to Human Nature; and has such visible Marks of God's Displeasure, as are enough to destroy all our Hopes of Immortality, and baffle all the Arguments which Reason can suggest for an Eternal Life. For who can imagine that God should send such an Executioner as Death, amongst those whom he loves so well as to reward with Eternal Life? Does any Artificer break to pieces a curious Piece of Work, which he has made and delights in? And can we think that God, who has made us after his own Image and Likeness, and given us such Tokens of his Love and Regard, would, after this, suffer us to become a Prey to Worms and Rottenness, a Sport to the Waves and Wind? And yet this he has done as a standing Mark of his Displeasure against Sin; and we may as it were read His Anger in the Face of every dying Man. So that when the Generations to come, and the Children which are yet unborn, shall see the Sentence of Death Universally take place, and feel it in themselves, and shall enquire into the Reason of this Dispensation; they may know, that it was

SERM. because of Sin, because Man kept not the  
 XV. Law of his Maker, and that God hath  
 sent Death into the World as a Token  
 of his just Anger at Sin, that all People  
 might see it, and fear, and do no more  
 presumptuously.

3dly and Lastly: Since our Blessed Sa-  
 viour has repair'd the Damage we sustain'd  
 by Adam's Fall, and has by his own Death  
 and Resurrection purchas'd for us a Re-  
 demption from Death and the Grave; we  
 ourselves must take Care to turn this to  
 our own Advantage; and so to Live, that  
 after Death we may attain to the Refur-  
 rection of the Just, and inherit Eternal  
 Life.

FOR Eternal Life is no where in Sa-  
 cred Scripture mention'd as the Portion  
 of all Men, but only of the Saints. But  
 the Resurrection of the Dead, and That  
 Life wherewith all, at last, shall be *made*  
*alive in Christ*; is what all Men in gene-  
 ral partake in, by the Benefit of Christ's  
 Death, whether they be Saints or Sinners,  
 Righteous or Wicked Persons; since here-  
 by all Men are justified from all that was  
 brought upon them by Adam's Sin; i. e.  
 they are discharg'd from Death, the Con-  
 sequence



sequence of *Adam's* Transgression; and restor'd to Life, to stand or fall by that Plea of Righteousness which they can make, either of their own by Works, or of the Righteousness of God by Faith.

SERM.

XV.

HENCE our Saviour tells us, in the Place already cited, that *all shall come forth of their graves; They that have done good, to the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation.* And St. Paul tells us, that *there shall be a Resurrection both of the* Acts xxiv. *Just and the Unjust.* The Wicked shall<sup>15.</sup> not escape their Punishment, by being lost in Death; nor shall the Righteous miss of their Reward, by continuing for ever in the Grave. Both shall be rais'd again to Life, and receive the things done in the Body, according to that they have done, whether it be good or bad.

So that if we would make what our Saviour has done for us a Blessing and not a Curse; if we would be Happy for ever in another State, and avoid endless Misery; we must take care to let our Conversation be as becomes the Gospel of Christ, by avoiding all those things which the Gospel condemns, and putting in

SERM. in Practice whatever is there enjoyn'd us  
 XV. So shall we be restor'd not only to that  
 Life and Being which we lost in *Adam*,  
 but to that Eternal Life and Happiness  
 which Christ has purchas'd for us. For  
*Blessed are they who do his Command-  
 ments, that they may have right to the  
 Tree of Life, and enter in through the  
 Gates into the City.*

BUT if instead of doing his Command-  
 ments, we have been following our own  
 Wills, and serving divers Lusts and Plea-  
 sures; if we have liv'd in the Contempt  
 or Neglect of his Laws; it would be  
 happier for us to have no part in the  
 Resurrection, but to sleep for ever in the  
 Grave, rather than to rise again at the  
 Last Day to a State infinitely worse than  
 Non-existence. For then *the Wicked shall  
 go away into Everlasting Punishment, and  
 the Righteous into Life Eternal.*

F I N I S.



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